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Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000e040>

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**English and Welsh Baptists in the Nineteen
Thirties: a Study in Political, Social
and Religious Crisis**

Ph.D. degree

**Arts Faculty
Religious Studies Department**

23 September 1993

The Open University

Authors no: L0043498

Date of submission: 2/3/93.

Date of award: 23/9/93.

English and Welsh Baptists in the Nineteen Thirties

a Study in Political, Social and Religious Crisis

ABSTRACT

Introduction:

This thesis sets out to examine the Baptist denomination in Britain during the 1930s. Its contention is that by this stage of their history Baptists were confused both about their denominational identity and about the role they could best play within contemporary society. From what appeared to be a pinnacle of success in the first decade of the century they moved into a period of almost continual decline in both numbers and influence. This thesis examines these matters in three stages:

Chapter 1 reviews current literature in the field of study, and places the present work in a wider historical, sociological and political context. It is argued that the Baptist denomination had been in crisis since around the year 1910, that crisis had deepened in the mid-Twenties once the post-war resurgence of Baptist numbers receded, and that the nature of the crisis was complex, involving the denomination's self-perception and its role within society at both national and local levels.

Chapters 2 to 7 constitute a detailed study of the Baptist denomination during the years 1930 to 1939. Chapter 2 analyses the year 1930 in detail and identifies the major topics to be examined

subsequently, focusing variously on Baptist responses to the numerical decline of the denomination, national political trends, social issues, the war debate, and international developments.

It is argued that the crisis of identity already apparent in the denomination deepened throughout the first half of the decade. A marked tendency towards apoliticisation can be discerned at a national level, and a generally diffident response to social and political change is also apparent by mid-point of the decade. This confusion and uncertainty within the denomination reached its zenith in 1935 with the firm stand taken by M E Aubrey, General Secretary of the Baptist Union, against the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction. The leadership of the Baptist Union was firmly committed to the Conservative-dominated National government. The temptation to return to the Liberal Party was seen as romanticism, and to change to a Labour allegiance was considered tantamount to affirming communism. This cautious stance permeated all areas of national leadership thinking.

Chapters 8 to 10: In these chapters conclusions about the national situation for Baptists have first been set against detailed studies of two Baptist churches in South Croydon. The underlying question considered was whether the churches were following a lead given by the denominational leadership or whether both national and local bodies moved in whatever particular direction changes in society might push them. The chief conclusion drawn from these studies is that the churches under consideration were so pre-occupied with the need to maintain their existing structures that there was little time or depth of concern remaining with which to address the

national and international issues of the day.

In *Chapter 11* these Croydonian findings are compared with those for a number of other Baptist churches. Detailed conclusions to this thesis are then set out in *Chapter 12*.

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Acknowledgements

During my undergraduate studies - which saw the initial dissertation from which this thesis has evolved - a number of people afforded me generous help. These include the Rev (now Dr) Roger Hayden (then Secretary of the Baptist Historical Society), the Rev Keith Clements (then Senior Tutor at Bristol Baptist College and Editor of the *Baptist Quarterly*); Dr David Bebbington (Department of History, University of Stirling); Dr David Thompson (Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge); Prof Keith Robbins (Department of History, Glasgow University).

Throughout my under- and post-graduate studies my work at the Baptist Church House Library was facilitated by Miss Pam Neville (Executive Assistant in the Department of Ministry). Mr Jeremy Savage (Librarian at Upper Norwood Library), the staffs of Selsdon Library, the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford (especially Mrs Susan Mills), Spurgeon's College, and Dr Williams' Library, were all most helpful. On a local church level help was proffered by Mr Harold Pinkham (long-time secretary of Brighton Road Baptist Church) and Dr Rosie Chadwick (author of the local history of Beulah Baptist Church, Oldham). Finally, thanks are due to Dr Morris West (formerly President of Bristol Baptist College) for his reading and constructive criticism of the final draft of this thesis, Mr Brian Gibbs who gave advice and help on computerised lay-out and to Mr David Dowley, a friend and patient proof-reader.

Introduction

Baptists have long wrestled with the twin Christian imperatives of evangelism and social response. Throughout their long history may be found times when their attempt to hold these notions in harmony has led to painful confusion, and sometimes harsh debate, within their various Associations and Unions. Even a cursory reading of almost any recent edition of the *Baptist Times* will highlight the fact that this age-old debate continues still.[1]

This familiar but also contemporary issue for Baptists thus deserves careful historical reappraisal, not least in order to set contemporary political and sociological debates in perspective. More importantly however, it may be argued that, because of its recurrent nature, this debate and its many ramifications can itself be used as an investigative tool with which to probe the state of the Baptist expression of Christianity at critical stages of its history.

The 1930s constitute, arguably, just such a critical period of British religious and social history. The so-called 'Nonconformist Conscience' had lost its fearsome authority by the early years of the second decade of this century. Also, with the effective demise of the Liberal Party in 1915, Baptists had lost their natural political haven. To these issues were added the vast social upheaval and the deep questioning of apparent certainties occasioned by the Great War. Vast changes were taking place in British society, changes which were bound to challenge the Christian churches in crucial areas of their lives and thinking. Indeed, it will be argued in the body of this thesis that the 1930s were critical years for the Baptist denomination precisely because it was during this decade that the full impact of the previous thirty years was felt by the churches.

This period of re-evaluation was rendered the more difficult by the magnitude of the economic slump. Just as the churches were beginning to come to terms with an entire complex of changes, yet further change was thrust upon them. In relation to this second issue we shall ask what response the Baptist churches made to the slump of the 1930s. Most importantly, to what extent was any response theologically motivated and led by the Union hierarchy? In particular, did Baptists feel able and qualified to offer a critique of the social conditions which prevailed for many of their fellow-citizens at this time? Again, and intimately related to the issues already highlighted, we question will be posed of whether the Baptist leaders had any political plans for the alleviation of the Slump, as their forbears most certainly would have had even a decade earlier.

In his essay, 'Free Churchmen and the Twenty Years Crisis,' Keith Robbins has argued a broad case for certain key trends in Nonconformist life between 1919 and 1939, focussing in detail on the war debate. He argues that, by 1930, the 'political/social/ecclesiastical amalgam of pre-1914 Nonconformity was fast dissolving.'^[2] Since 1918 Free Churchmen had suffered less discrimination, and they therefore had fewer points on which to focus their innate radicalism.

It is the aim of the present study both to address the broad questions of Baptist identity noted above and to test Robbins' thesis concerning Free Church responses to the twenty years of crisis by an analysis of the political trends within the English and Welsh Baptist constituencies, and their degree of involvement in political activism and social care in the period 1930-39. In particular, the thesis seeks to determine whether, by the 1930s, Baptists had made a *de facto* withdrawal from the national

political and opinion-forming stage, and if such a withdrawal had taken place, asks what were the reasons for and results of such a move. This is also closely linked to an assessment of whether changes in Baptist life were generated principally by leadership from the Union hierarchy, by theological movements at local church level, or by general external factors. Finally, from these conclusions there will be an overall appraisal of the state of the Baptist denomination in England and Wales at this time.

Source material

The methodological implications of my extensive use of the *Baptist Times* in this thesis require explanation and comment. Such heavy use of a single source can be viewed as academically questionable, but it may also be argued that the danger is mitigated by an understanding both of the nature and the limitations of the material in question and also of the particular concern of this thesis with the relationship between 'centre' and 'locality.'

The *Baptist Times* has always stood in a special relationship to the Baptist Union, claiming to be an independent organ but generally being recognised as reflecting the overall policies of the Union leadership. Indeed, in the period addressed by this study it was wholly owned by the Baptist Union.[3]

How far its views were ever those of the wider Baptist constituency is not easy to determine. Indeed, one of the aims of this thesis is to draw a comparison between 'official' and 'local' Baptist viewpoints. Robbins highlights the potential pitfalls, arguing that great care must be taken to understand the precise nature of the material under consideration. He

further cautions against assuming that resolutions and statistics drafted at national level, filtered down through editorials and articles in the denominational press, do in fact represent what 'ordinary' church people think.[4]

The actual policy adopted by J C Carlile whilst editor of the *Baptist Times* was explained by him at the height of the debate over Baptist involvement in the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction later in the decade: 'I hold that the policy of our official organ should be freedom for individual expressions of opinion over the names of the writers. Where a denominational view is expressed, it may be in a leading article; the official utterance should be from the Secretary's Chair.'[5] Carlile's position by the 1930s had clearly been conditioned by that of M E Aubrey[6] who, on accepting the nomination of the Baptist Union Council to become the denomination's General Secretary in 1925, stated firmly that: '[the] editor-in-chief should be the secretary of the denomination...'[7] He was the best choice because, in Aubrey's view, he was more in touch with the life of the denomination than anyone else. Aubrey was also concerned that an independent editor-in-chief might set himself in opposition to the Baptist Union Council in a way that the General Secretary would not.

This issue will, in part at least, be resolved in the course of this thesis when the relationship between the *Baptist Times* and the stated policy of the leadership of the Baptist Union is explored, and compared with the opinions of Baptists in particular local geographical areas.

It will be noted from the footnoting of this thesis that through the articles, correspondence and expressed views of their ministers a wide range of Baptist churches is implicated in the discussions for the period. As will be shown in the study of Brighton Road Baptist Church, church

members did not invariably share the political or theological views of their ministers. Yet this would not always have been the case. Indeed, he is a brave minister who expresses political or social views in publications if those views are far removed from the views of the people to whom he ministers - and who pay his stipend!

Footnotes to Introduction:

1. See, for example, *Baptist Times*, 21/2/85 p 4.
2. K Robbins, 'Free Churchmen and the Twenty Years Crisis,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1978, XXVII:1, p 348.
3. *Annual Report: 1936*, The Baptist Union, p 24.
4. Robbins, 'Free Churchmen and the Twenty Years Crisis,' p 348.
5. *Baptist Times*, 4/7/35 p 494.
6. On M E Aubrey, see: *infra*, *passim*.
7. M E Aubrey to Dr T R Glover (chairman of the Baptist Union Council), 6/3/25. cf M E Aubrey to J H Rushbrooke, 18/3/35. Most of the correspondence cited in this thesis is to be found in the Aubrey Papers, currently deposited in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

CHAPTER 1

English and Welsh Baptists in the 1930s: the Context and Background

With the benefit of hindsight the 1930s have come to be seen as critical years in British history. They were also demanding years for the British Christian churches. They must not, however, be viewed in isolation. In terms of both secular and ecclesiastical history they need to be placed within a broader historical context if they are to be fairly evaluated. The concern of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the development of both Baptist and wider Nonconformist communities in the period prior to the 1930s, with a view to defining the context from which the changes in specifically Baptist church life in the 1930s can themselves be analysed. This is particularly needful in view of the widely held opinion that the years 1870 to 1914 constituted the highwater mark for British Nonconformity.

An overview of British Baptist history from the late nineteenth century to 1939

From the early 1870s through to the mid-1880s the Baptist churches of Britain enjoyed a time of unprecedented prosperity and growth. Despite the animosity engendered during the Downgrade controversy of 1887 and 1888, growth both in numbers and social status continued.^[1] Church membership steadily climbed, passing the 300,000 figure for the first time. Baptist leaders thus duly began to focus their attention more sharply on the need for unity within the denomination and for the expression of a more

specifically Baptist identity. It was in the light of these trends that, at the 1889 Assembly, the decision was taken to abstain from the Lambeth Quadrilateral. In this action the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland shared with the Methodist Conference.[2] Three reasons were given for this refusal: that the Christianity of the New Testament was essentially the introduction of a spiritual, personal, and non-sacerdotal religion; that the New Testament law of baptism required a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ 'as a prerequisite to the administration of the rite'; and that, in subjection to the teaching of the Word of God, the internal government of each church should be conducted by 'the professed servants of the Saviour, and should be in no way controlled by the Sovereign powers of the State.'[3] It is clear, however, that the real reason lay in the rising self-confidence of the denomination and of Nonconformity as a whole. Why should Nonconformists have closer relationships with those who had hitherto excluded them, at the very point in time when Nonconformity was becoming a force to be reckoned with? The aim of greater Baptist unity was also furthered significantly at the Birmingham Assembly in 1889 by the acceptance of a report on the *Amalgamation of General and Particular Baptists*. Formal negotiations were to take place between 1889 and 1891 under the leadership of John Clifford, minister of Praed Street Baptist Church, Paddington.

In 1896/7 the Baptist Union took a decisive step towards denominationalism with the introduction - under Charles Williams, chairman of the newly-formed Board of Introduction and Consultation - of an effective ministerial recognition scheme. Its purpose was declared to be that of preventing the unworthy or unfit entering the ministry, commending to the denomination those qualified, and securing to the recognised the eligibility for funds.[4] College training was also officially recommended

for all would-be Baptist ministers. A measure of the rising social and political influence of Baptists, meanwhile, can be gauged from the fact that in the 1892 parliamentary election at least 11 of the more than 100 Liberals elected claimed or were claimed to be Baptists.[5]

All was not well within the Baptist community, however. By the early 1890s some of its leading thinkers were arguing that a gulf had developed between organised religion and much of the industrial population. On the other hand, the denominational leadership was not a little embarrassed that such ministers as J C Carlile, then minister of Dockhead Baptist Church, and Archibald Brown of the East London Tabernacle had supported the dockers in their 1889 strike for more satisfactory terms of employment. Many Baptists looked askance at such actions,[6] although the stance adopted by such as Clifford and Brown reflected the definite sympathy with radicalism felt by many Baptist ministers. Yet this political stance was often associated with a move towards what was perceived to be the adoption of a liberal theology. Again, it appears that the death in 1892 of C H Spurgeon and the slight weakening of the hold of conservative evangelicalism over the denomination around this time served to allow the more rapid movement of the denomination in that direction. The search for social esteem remained important to Baptists as it did also for other Nonconformists. To a great extent their existing association with the Liberal Party served them well as the power and influence of the latter continued to increase. As a result, Baptists, and most other Nonconformist groupings, became increasingly concerned with the achievement of political and social power through the Liberal Party.[7] Indeed, Koss has taken this idea further, asserting that by this time dissent - in all its divisiveness - actually tended to find its cohesion in politics.[8] Thus, it may be argued that the apparently powerful

edifice of Nonconformity was possessed of the inherent weakness of relying on certain political allegiances to give it its sense of united purpose.

During this period a major figure entered the senior Baptist leadership structure. The new General Secretary of the Baptist Union was to be John Howard Shakespeare, a Yorkshireman and long-time minister of St Mary's Baptist Church, Norwich. Shakespeare brought with him a breadth of theology and outlook which was to have a lasting effect upon the denomination. He was installed to office at the Autumn Assembly in Nottingham in October 1898. The next year an appeal was launched for £250,000 as the Twentieth Century Fund. Half was to be used for church extension, especially in urban areas. Of the remainder, £34,000 was to be used to build a new denominational headquarters - up to then the Baptist Union had shared the offices of the Baptist Missionary Society in Furnival Street. The appeal resulted in the redevelopment of the old Eagle Street Church, Holborn, with a facade on Southampton Row.[9]

On the wider front, as the Boer War drew to a close such Baptist worthies as John Clifford, F B Meyer (by then minister of Regent's Park Baptist Church, London) and J H Shakespeare were active in expressing the Free Church mind on the right terms for peace.[10] Indeed, Clifford had consistently led the minority of Free Churchmen opposed to the Boer War.[11]

The turn of the century witnessed a time of apparent expansion and genuine optimism within Nonconformity in general. Amongst Baptists, numbers at first showed no sign of ceasing their steady increase in absolute terms. *The Freeman* journal became *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, and in 1910 *The Baptist* also joined the amalgamation to create *The Baptist Times*. As Payne comments: 'A new century, a new leader, a new paper, new resources - and with these a revised new hymn book, new departments and

new constitution, and new responsibilities.'[12]

It comes as no surprise, then, that in his presidential address to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1904 Dr John Wilson^[13] of Woolwich could note that in the seventeenth century Commonwealth Nonconformists were probably one thirtieth of the population, in the early nineteenth century they were one eighth, but in 1904 they could be estimated at one half. He commented: '...in fifty years we shall be two to one - or rather, by that time our witness to liberty will be crowned with success, and the Anglican Church, freed from the bondage of the state, will unite with the Free Churches in every conflict for righteousness and truth.'[14]

The apparently promising consolidation of the Baptist denomination, noted by Payne, was perceived as but one aspect of a more general Nonconformist advance. Indeed, Kent rightly argues that the evolution of Nonconformity from a pressure group into a major political power occurred slowly, but surely, during this period from 1870 onwards. Complex changes were occurring within the Nonconformist mind-set. Kent suggests that they expressed more and more clearly both their sense of self-confidence and their feelings of rejection in a concerted attempt to impose their own social world-view on the rest of British society.^[15] These tensions within the Nonconformist self-perception deepened, in fact, as Nonconformity found it impossible to move beyond its pietist tradition. Controversially, Kent argues that Nonconformists never became fully committed to a national platform.^[16] Increasingly, their critics perceived their pietism as a reason for sharp criticism.

Moreover, as early as 1907, the generally optimistic picture had already changed markedly. Membership of the Baptist churches had fallen by 5,000. Such a fall may not be considered significant unless one bears in mind

that Wilson's optimistic philosophy had become widespread. Increase rather than decline had been the order of the day. So concerned was the leadership of the Baptist Union that in the same year the Baptist Union Council established a special committee on Baptist Arrested Progress.[17] Statistical evidence indicates, however, that the numerical decline in Nonconformity had set in long before it became apparent to the leaders of the churches. Cox actually places the start of decline as early as the mid- to late-1880s and early-1890s.[18] The pattern would appear to be one of absolute growth but proportional decline (as against the national population) during the 1880s and both absolute and proportional decline from the 1890s onwards. These seeds of decline only came to fruition in the wake of the steady weakening of the link between Nonconformists and the Liberal Party towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. In fact, a variety of issues combined at this point to cause a crisis of identity among Nonconformists in general and Baptists in particular.

At least six factors were at work. Firstly, a survey by the *Daily News* in 1902-3[19] had shown a growing gap between the churches and the working classes. Nonconformists were faring better than Anglicans. Through Pleasant Sunday Afternoons and Brotherhoods interest was broadened into political and social areas. The latter organisation had some 150,000 members by the time of its diamond jubilee in 1935. But with the benefit of hindsight some commentators were by then reflecting on its early days and asking whether this attempt to enlarge the 'vision' of the church had actually caused it to drift even further from its spiritual anchor? Part of this re-evaluation was pragmatic because by the 1930s the churches were finding it increasingly difficult to service their vast range of organisations. In many cases these auxiliaries had evolved slowly into

separate organisations and actually served to deepen the growing rift between the church and the working classes.[20] Additionally, in the early twentieth century, the development of local council-sponsored adult education programmes also detracted from the activities of church-based groups. Two notable London Baptist churches affected by such changes were the Metropolitan Tabernacle and the Westbourne Park Baptist Church.[21] The provision of professional social workers was also a blow to the identity of church-based voluntary social care workers.[22] Cox, for example, observes that the disappearance of penny dinners and district visitors was but the most visible sign of a highly significant transformation of attitudes about the relationship between the churches and society. This transformation reached a crisis point between 1906 and 1914.[23] Prophetically, J H Shakespeare had actually been warning of the growing problems within Nonconformity since 1890.[24] In response to these changes some Nonconformist churches began to address such collective issues as old age and housing. But this, in turn, brought them the swift condemnation of the more radical political groupings for the merely palliative nature of their recommendations.

Secondly, and closely linked to the first point, the Labour movement was capturing ground in many traditional Free Church areas such as South Wales. The Independent Labour Party even echoed the organisational methods of various religious groups - notably the Baptists.

Thirdly, Halévy suggests that because of the increasing indifference to religion of the general public, the social position of the Nonconformists was steadily improving. Additionally, this indifference and tolerance endangered the old Puritan tradition of dissent.[25] The complexity of these changes is well explored by Cox. He notes, for example, the uncertainty in John Clifford's preaching as to the particular social class

to which his preaching should be directed.[26] Cox further argues that Nonconformist chapels and traditions had initially supplied a method of social categorisation which enabled, and indeed encouraged, one to despise one's 'betters.' People newly converted to Nonconformity might even be expected to achieve distinctive changes in speech and behaviour.[27] It is noteworthy that it tended to be these superficial changes, rather than any perceived theological aberrations, that invited the mockery and disdain of the literary world.[28] Adding weight to this position, in his *The Dissolution of Dissent, 1850-1918*, Mark Johnson[29] has argued that, in the Congregationalist context at least, the decline set in as a result of a theological dissolution into bland ecumenism, and that a desire to take their place in society undermined traditional dissent. Johnson's work is of particular value because of its focus on the influence of such trends on Mansfield College, Oxford, at which many Baptist ministers of this period had been trained, most notable of whom were M E Aubrey and Howard Ingli James.

Fourthly, public controversies were no longer as clear cut as they had once been. Many Nonconformists had been largely unhappy with the Boer War, although a not inconsiderable minority took a frankly imperialist position, adding weight in the process to the increasing tide of criticism voiced at the manner in which Nonconformist moral judgements were at the mercy of their political needs.[30] Kent goes so far as to assert that the decline in Nonconformity lay in part in the impression its exponents made on contemporaries. This often implied that they were more interested in power than in morality.[31] Indeed, the realities of politics put an increasing strain on the late Victorian claim to a Christian conscience in public affairs, as did the realisation that Nonconformists did not enjoy a monopoly of moral concern in politics. This may well, in part at least,

explain why the decline in Nonconformity was more rapid in the wealthier denominations.[32] Opposition to British involvement in South Africa was soon followed by bitter controversy over Balfour's Education Bill introduced in March 1902. This distinctly 'old status' issue led to the Passive Resistance Movement,[33] led by John Clifford, once the Bill became law. The Passive Resistance Movement aimed to persuade householders to withhold that proportion of their rates devoted to church schools. There can be little doubt that part of the ferocious reaction to this Bill can be explained by the deep anti-Catholicism still felt in Nonconformist circles. This was rekindled by the inclusion within the Bill of funding for Catholic schools.[34] Despite confusion, then, on this issue at least, it seemed as if the Nonconformist Conscience might still prove a powerful political force. Indeed, Koss poses the question: 'Did the 1902 Education Act win adherents for an embattled faith, or did the new devoutness inspire a determination to venture forth in battle?'[35] In answer to his question, the sharp decline in Nonconformist numbers from about this time indicates that the Passive Resistance Movement must have been perceived by its exponents as a venturing forth in battle, but that it was a false and irrelevant quest so far as the mass of the populace were concerned.

Fifthly, the rise of the Welfare State was beginning to offer legislative support to the working classes outside the religious structures. As a result of the Unemployed Insurance Act of 1911 two and a half million men out of a work-force of nineteen million were covered for fifteen weeks each year. This Act evoked protests from many churches as support for their charitable work collapsed.[36] This benefit was extended in 1920, and in the Unemployed Workers' Dependents Act 1921, benefit was extended to wives and children of the unemployed. These moves towards a wider Welfare State were further extended during the 1920s.[37] Social

dependence upon the churches was lessening rapidly.[38] Allied to this was the increasing availability of entertainment, and not least of entertainment on Sundays.[39] As early as 1912 cinemas - and Sunday opening in particular - were perceived by Nonconformist Christians as a powerful challenge to their ethos.[40] This was no new movement as such. Evangelicals had opposed Sunday theatre as early as 1839, and the Sunday opening of the Crystal Palace in 1854.[41] As noted already, Pleasant Sunday Afternoon groups were formed in part to provide a 'Christian' alternative to the cinemas, but clearly they largely failed in this aim with all but the already committed.[42]

Finally, yet very importantly, the Sunday school movement was entering a period of severe crisis. In its greatest period from 1831 to 1870, numbers in Sunday schools had risen from half a million to three and a half million. This was far in excess of the birth rate and the rate of church growth.[43] Crisis was, in part, precipitated by the Education Act of 1870 which took from the Sunday schools much of their role in basic secular education.[44] Yet the Sunday schools had also been largely unsuccessful in recruiting teenagers into full church membership.[45] Other factors served to compound this crisis: the Biblical criticism debates from the mid-nineteenth century onwards questioned old certainties; practical conditions were poor in Sunday school halls compared with the new local authority schools, and this led to more Sunday school halls being erected and a consequent widening of the gap between Sunday school and church.[46] Relative to the national population, Sunday schools declined from 19% of the child population in 1818 to 16% in 1901. In the specifically Baptist context the peak in absolute numbers occurred in 1906 (586,600), but the peak relative to the national population had occurred twenty years earlier, in 1885.[47] Cliff argues that the Sunday schools arose in

response to the emergence of the Industrial Revolution and declined as industrial centres grew to the point where heavy industry and a proletarian population dominated.[48]

All of these factors were to have a continuing impact on Baptist and wider Nonconformist life well into the 1930s. Cox sums up the position well, concluding that what happened in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century was that a complicated view of the world gradually disintegrated. As social and institutional relationships changed, assumptions about religion changed, and this inevitably included assumptions about the importance of religion.[49]

To return to our historical overview, it may be observed that after the 1906 election there remained a number of leading Nonconformist MPs. Estimates suggest around 157. Asquith, the Prime Minister, was of Dissenting stock; Lloyd George had once been an active member of the Churches of Christ; Augustine Birrell, son of C M Birrell, minister of Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, was MP for Bristol North and a member of the government; Percy Illingworth, the Liberal Chief Whip, was a practising Baptist. Indeed, Munson suggests there also were as many as three Nonconformist ministers and sixteen sons of ministers.[50] Hastings, however, claims that most of these MPs were lapsed Nonconformists.[51] In fact, this was to prove a frustrating period of political history for Nonconformists. Debates continued over the power of the House of Lords, the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, women's suffrage, and Home Rule for Ireland[52]. The split in the Liberal Party over Home Rule actually served to weaken still further the Nonconformist political stance because it made politics more controversial.[53] Also from this point on some Nonconformists exhibited keen social aspirations, beginning to look

for a political home in the Conservative Party. Over and above these contentious debates lay the cloud of uncertainty as to Germany's intentions.[54]

Spiritually and numerically, Baptist decline continued despite the evangelistic campaigns of such as R A Torrey, J A Alexander and Gipsy Smith.[55] Theological dissension also resurfaced through the so-called 'New Theology' views espoused and preached by R J Campbell of the City Temple.[56] One who at least echoed Campbell's strongly immanentist views[57] within the Baptist camp was John Clifford who, in a speech at Forest Hill Baptist Church in June 1908, argued that: 'Socialism in the soul of it is divine. It is of God. The churches ought...to take full share in the gradual reformation and rebuilding of society, to welcome every practical extension of the Socialist principle.'[58] Undoubtedly, much of the concern of such as Clifford was that liberty of conscience should be extended to theological radicals although their defence of the liberty principle did not imply their full acceptance of Campbell's views.[59]

In the period prior to the Great War, then, it was the years 1898 to 1906 that were perceived by British Baptists themselves as their highpoint - as they were also for the Liberal Party and for Nonconformity in general. Numbers had seemingly continued to increase for much of this period; a new headquarters was opened and an apparently thriving bureaucracy controlled central Baptist affairs. Baptists were leaders in dissent, many opposing the Boer War. Yet by 1907, decline, which had already begun imperceptibly to set in, became a recognised concern. The reasons for decline, as have been noted, were many: Baptists were victims of their own success, their rise in social standing separating them from

the working classes; the Labour Party was ready and waiting to receive those members of the working classes disenchanted with the church; social dependence upon the churches was also weakening as many social evils were ameliorated; the Sunday school system to which Baptists were so committed had itself entered a time of uncertainty and change. Baptists themselves, meanwhile, were becoming more inward looking - witness the disputes on theology that re-emerged in this period.

Thus it was that the outbreak of the Great War came as a further shock to a denomination already struggling with deep and confusing changes in its self-perceptions. Ironically it occurred whilst Clifford and Rushbrooke were in Constance sharing in the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches.^[60] Free Church support soon rallied to the cause of 'the just war,' and by 1917 Drs Rushbrooke, Clifford and Shakespeare could sum up the position of the majority of British Baptists who saw the war as a fight 'for Christianity against paganism, for right against cruel tyranny; for humanity against the works of the devil.'^[61] Indeed, Shakespeare became an adviser to Lloyd George on the latter's attaining the premiership.

John Clifford's concerns at the outbreak of the Great War were but an extension of his wider concerns about capitalism. His New Year message to his congregation in January 1914 stated boldly that: 'A new era is coming nearer and nearer every year... Militarism belongs to the dark ages; it is not fit for our time. It must go. It is going. Priestism is a waning force... [Nationalism and imperialism] must broaden into internationalism and through that into brotherhood.'^[62] Clifford initially favoured neutrality, commenting: 'War is anti-Christian.'^[63] However, even he was forced to acknowledge that this was a fight between 'the forces of freedom

and those of slavery.' Thus it was in no small measure due to Clifford that the Baptist Union Council asserted in September 1914: 'We believe the call of God has come to Britain to spare neither blood nor treasure in the struggle to shatter a great anti-Christian attempt to destroy the fabric of Christian civilisation.'^[64]

Another keen supporter of the government at this time was the Rev Thomas Phillips, minister of Bloomsbury Baptist Church,^[65] who was a great admirer of Lloyd George. Indeed, Wilkinson argues that during this period Nonconformists felt that a Liberal government could be trusted so long as it included Lloyd George - even John Clifford was not averse to sharing a recruiting platform with him.^[66] Nonconformist support for Lloyd George was, of course, rewarded in the New Year's Honours List of January 1918.^[67] Koss argues that, in fact, Nonconformist fortunes had become solidly linked to Lloyd George by 1906, and became manifest in the education debate of that year, and debates over disestablishment and licensing in 1907 and 1908 respectively.^[68] The shift in Nonconformist thought on the subject of war and peace was further echoed in the establishment in 1915 of the United Board of Free Church Chaplains under the chairmanship of J H Shakespeare. Wilkinson sums up the changed position well: 'Who would have predicted before the war that dissenters would be petitioning for more honours from the military establishment?'^[69]

At a local level, many Baptist churches had placed themselves firmly behind the war effort. Thus, for example, the magazine of the Brighton Road Baptist Church, South Croydon, for August 1919 recorded:

'Last month we Welcomed Home another of our boys, Mr Harry Brown, from France. Now the Peace has come, it is a great satisfaction for us as a

church to know we have taken our part worthily in this great conflict of right versus wrong. Over 100 of our boys went, whilst over a dozen paid the supreme price. We are very thankful that the church has decided to place a Memorial to our gallant boys who gave their lives for us. It is the least we can give, they gave their all.'

In part, the explanation for the support offered for the war effort by Baptist churches can be found in the success of the so-called Pals Battalions by which whole social sub-groups were able to enlist together. John Keagan's list of such groupings - work places, factories, unions, churches, chapels, charitable organisations, benefit clubs, Scouts, Boys' Brigade, Sunday schools, cricket/football/rugby/skittle clubs, old boys' societies, offices, municipal departments, craft guilds - contains many of the very institutions that had become part of Nonconformist chapel fabric in the Edwardian era, offering 'an emotional leverage on British male response...'[70] These comments must, however, be held in tension with the evidence adduced by Cox that for many working-class people the very links with churches through philanthropic clubs were often perceived as a form of bribery and were thus not as secure as was once thought.[71]

The war also highlighted the continuing decline in religious and moral allegiances in the nation. Some Baptist leaders, such as J H Shakespeare, identified the problem of what he saw to be an over-politicised National Free Church Council - a concern expressed 25 years earlier by the Congregationalist R W Dale.[72] During his year as President of the National Free Church Council (1916-17) Shakespeare called for a new federation of the Free Churches - a cause for which he had first pleaded at the Hull Assembly of the National Free Church Council in 1910.[73] This resulted in the formation of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free

Churches in 1919. His vision went far beyond this to encompass the notion of a new United Free Church of England, arguing that the church must come to understand the attitude and temper of its own time, and that the contribution of the church as a church would not be by way of programme, or by linking itself to any party in the State, but by infusing the spirit of Christ into human affairs. Matters developed - not without strong opposition - until in April 1921 Archbishop Cosmo Lang (then of York) addressed the Baptist Union Assembly on the 'Appeal to All Christian People' which had been issued by the Lambeth Conference a year earlier.^[74] This, too, was a cause of dissension and division within the Baptist Union. For five years discussions continued, but Shakespeare was by this time increasingly ill. With the breakdown of his health the Baptist leadership fell to the less visionary Charles Brown (minister of Ferme Park Baptist Church), W Y Fullerton (Home Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society), J H Rushbrooke (Eastern Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance) and Herbert Marnham (Honorary Treasurer of the Baptist Union).

A complex dynamic was at work, then, in Nonconformity in the years leading up to and immediately following the Great War. This dynamic arose from and extended the changes in perception already noted earlier in this chapter. Mudie Smith argued that by the early years of the twentieth century there was already an almost uniform connection between socio-economic class and church going.^[75] Certain areas of London retained only minute levels of church attenders by reason of the traders and middle-class enclave dwellers living in them. Soon these few would join the flight to the newer suburbs leaving widespread alienation between the masses and the church in the working-class areas of London. Mudie Smith considered that only the Sunday schools had any substantial success in

crossing these social lines of demarcation and 'this would have occurred, it was said, even if the teachers had been "mild-mannered Buddhists", provided at least they were white.'[76]

As has already been noted, the reasons for this continued disaffection of the lower classes were several. In part it was due to the cultural gap and lack of communication. Contemporary critics, for example, cited the lack of change and adaptation in the conducting of public worship - a factor which Chapter 2 of this thesis addresses.[77] But there were other factors also. Some blame the moral failure of the churches in not giving to working men any positions of status and responsibility. Others blame the easy dispensing of charity by the churches in place of social justice. Still others call attention to the sheer apathy of the poor and the embarrassment their poverty brought them on entering church.

McLeod[78] and Cox[79] draw a different verdict, namely, that the working classes were, by this time, often alienated from regular church or chapel going and formal religious commitment while maintaining a vague 'diffusive Christianity.' This would have left the hopes of formal commitment of Baptist and other churches unsatisfied. This thesis in large measure confirms the rightness of Cox's view. Cox goes further, suggesting that: 'The public, inoculated with a little religion, was immune to the true faith.'[80] Indeed, Cox also suggests that an over-emphasis on work amongst children was a major cause of later decline within Nonconformity.[81] It is important to realise that many more theologically-liberal Nonconformist leaders regarded this as no bad thing. Cox notes that diffusive Christianity was something more than simple theism, although not much more.[82]

Cox has explored his thesis further, defining what appears to be an inherent division in Nonconformity. In his view the analysis of

Nonconformity by denominations has hidden a deeper division based on social perception. Thus he identifies two quite distinct yet not entirely exclusive types of Nonconformity: the plebeian and the genteel. The plebeian grouping were not unaware of their marginality. They tended to be the most theologically conservative, and were also suspicious of or even hostile to political activity except in the most exceptional circumstances. In contrast, genteel Nonconformity often utilised liturgy in worship, was more reserved in worship style and less overtly evangelistic. The emphasis amongst them was more on education than conversion, practical ethics rather than salvation by faith. People tended to be educated into the chapel of their parents. This dichotomy is perhaps best highlighted in F B Meyer's practice of running his Sunday morning service in a dignified, formal manner, whilst having a lively, informal service in the afternoon for the more working-class members of his church. In Cox's opinion, genteel Nonconformity also tended to be condescending towards less advantaged neighbouring chapels.[83]

Cox extends his analysis by deducing that Nonconformist political action arose as a function of increasing affluence even amongst the plebeian chapel-goers.[84] This was closely tied in with the rise of the Free Church Council movement, the National Free Church Council holding its first Congress in 1892 and being formally constituted in 1896.[85] The first 'political' concern of Nonconformists lay in the area of alcohol abuse. This soon hardened, of course, into a doctrinaire abstentionist position, involving an active campaign against public houses.[86] The poor were to be helped, but generally it was thought best that such help should be given on a personal basis, although a few more radical Nonconformist leaders went beyond this to call for social reform.[87] Indeed, even the great issue which united most Nonconformists in the early days of the

twentieth century - the Education Act 1902, which successfully pulled many Nonconformists into the Liberal camp in opposition to the Conservative government - also served to mask the deep rifts which were already emerging within Nonconformity.[88] Thus, Thompson makes the salutary comment that: 'The education controversy of 1902 therefore is significant because it is exceptional.'^[89] Writing in 1935, M E Aubrey could assert: 'No one in his senses would claim that the blessing of God rested upon that episode in our story. I do not think we have yet recovered from it.'^[90]

Behind such tensions lay the diversification of Nonconformist allegiances. Since the 1870s increasing numbers of Nonconformists had begun voting in a variety of ways according to their own social status. Cox argues that the Conservative victories of 1885 and 1888 showed them to be the natural choice of suburban householders regardless of their religious persuasion.^[91] This move to class-based politics was accelerated within London in the 1890s by the polarisation of the London County Council into Progressive and Moderate parties. The reactionary Moderates clearly had no time for what they perceived to be temperance fanatics, opposers of entertainment and 'socialism.'^[92] Gordon, meanwhile, has demonstrated that in Scotland temperance had long been viewed as the key social issue for Christians.^[93] By the end of the Edwardian decade Nonconformist progressives had advanced in their thinking from an advocacy of local government intervention to a call for national government intervention in housing, pensions and unemployment.^[94] Yet the clear identification of progressivism with socialism was too much for many Nonconformists and this hastened their move into Conservatism.^[95]

Notwithstanding these defections, for the politically radical Nonconformists the distinction between church and state remained blurred

indeed. Cox argues that, for Nonconformists, political actions took on a religious significance in which society became a kind of church and government became a means through which God himself worked in the world.[96] Even the deeply evangelical F B Meyer could affirm in 1905 that progressivism and social reform were local manifestations of a world-wide, divinely-inspired advance of democracy and freedom.[97] Yet for these radicals there was to come the disappointment of a New Liberalism which was no longer concerned for the issues of personal morality which they held dear, and was even dismissive of the value of religion altogether.[98]

In addition, the impact of the Great War has also been seen as crucial in the changing fortunes of Nonconformity. This perception is exemplified by Wallace Vellam Pitts, a Baptist layman, whose own Christian views had been thrown into total confusion by the events of 1914-18.[99] The flavour of his comments can be discerned from his remarks that: 'The first shock was when Sid Rayner, one of my Bible class, was killed. The prayers at home for the "Boys at the Front" did not seem very effective. How much did the Bible support this war?...I was disillusioned with the simple Edwardian faith which I had accepted without question. Now it was nothing but questions and no answers.'[100] He concludes:

'...all that I had accepted without question in that Edwardian age dropped out of me like a plummet. At home they were praying for a British victory and the Germans were doing the same for a German victory. One hate cancelled out another hate and God was expected to take sides. When the war was over, it was that hypocritical contradiction which the survivors rejected and so were lost to the churches.'[101]

Again, writing of the early- to mid-Twenties he comments: 'The Edwardian churches were filled Sunday after Sunday. Now there were empty spaces and small congregations.' [102]

Stevenson also sees the support for the Great War manifested by Nonconformist leaders as crucial to an understanding of the crisis which deepened within Nonconformity in the post-war period. Many clergymen faced spiritual crisis as they tried to come to terms with the vast numbers of deaths - including those of their own sons. [103] There was also a more widespread sense of detestation that such horror and carnage had received the often bellicose support of clergymen. [104] Also, and more subtly, there were other outcomes of the Great War which were to have a profound effect on the influence of the churches, including an increase in state intervention in social issues with the improvements in living standards which followed, and the considerable strengthening of organised labour. [105] Indeed, in the space of a few pages Hastings presents a vast array of social effects arising from the Great War: women had become more widespread in the work force, trades union membership had risen from 4 million to 8 million, the Unemployment Act 1920 had proved an enormous advance on the National Insurance Act 1911, [106] and recreational values were all rapidly changing with the increase in private transport and personal means of entertainment such as the radio. [107]

Controversy and division thus continued to be prominent in Baptist circles during the period from 1914 to the early 1920s, centring, in particular, on the issues of ecumenism and the alleged over-politicisation of the church. The First World War left its dark cloud over the entire era as Christian pacifism had given way to a war in defence of Christendom. Although Baptist numbers showed a slight resurgence in the early 1920s

they soon dropped dramatically. The denomination was by then in a state of deep confusion as to its identity within the wider world of Nonconformity. A crucial question which must be posed of the Baptist Union at this time, however, is surely: 'Did it know that this was the case?'

As J H Shakespeare's health declined in the early 1920s, so the name of M E Aubrey came increasingly to the fore in the denomination and beyond. In 1925 J C Carlile was asked to become editor of the *Baptist Times* for a period of three years. In fact, he served in that capacity for a total of 16 years. For various reasons, some of which will become more clear later in this thesis, Carlile was never to prove a popular figure. His somewhat abrasive manner and tendency to look back nostalgically to what he perceived to be the great days of the 1880s and 1890s meant that he increasingly represented his own brand of Baptist thinking.

The 1926 Assembly in Leeds, under the presidency of J H Rushbrooke,^[108] and at which M E Aubrey was appointed General Secretary, is notable for its coinciding with the declaration of the General Strike. An attempt by a group of ministers to put together some Christian policy on this issue failed to command the interest of the Assembly.^[109] One of the few who managed to raise the subject of the strike in the local situation was J N Britton, who also addressed the 1928 Toronto Baptist World Congress on the subject of 'Industrialism.'^[110] Under Aubrey's leadership several organisational changes took place. In 1926 the Baptist Total Abstinence Association became part of the Union's official activities.^[111] A year later Dr T G Dunning, minister of Park Street Church, Luton, was appointed to oversee the temperance, social service and youth matters of the denomination. Most change took place in the youth area of his brief. The Women's Department also expanded considerably. Yet whilst the Union's

bureaucracy continued to enlarge and develop, unrest was building among a large proportion of the ministers.[112] The reason for this was simple - financial stringency, not to say hardship.

There was also a further negative influence on ministerial morale in the later 1920s and early 1930s. Numerical decline was, by now, becoming both severe and persistent. As is discussed more fully later in this thesis, several efforts were subsequently made to encourage the denomination spiritually and to slow down this decline in numbers. The most widely supported of these attempts - all of which failed statistically - was the Discipleship Campaign launched in 1932. It had as its object the aim of 'securing that every church member lead at least one person into the direct service of Christ and the church.'[113] The absence of any statistical changes for the better in the denomination is the more significant because of the widespread involvement of the churches in this campaign.[114]

The 1932 Campaign was followed in 1935 by the appointment of a Baptist Union Evangelist and Commissioner for Evangelism - the Rev J N Britton. His service in this capacity lasted until 1938. In 1936 there was also the call by the leading Baptist layman, R W Black, for a Forward Movement. Part of the failure of these evangelistic endeavours can arguably be traced to the theological differences becoming apparent within the denomination. The most public controversy at this time was that surrounding the Cambridge lecturer and Baptist deacon, T R Glover. In March 1932 dispute arose over a pamphlet drafted by Glover entitled *Fundamentals*. It had been written as part of the Discipleship Campaign at the invitation of the Baptist Union Council. The section dealing with the Atonement was attacked by the Rev Tydeman Chilvers of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and the Rev Thomas Greenwood[115] minister of Waterloo Baptist

Church, Liverpool. As the controversy unfolded: '...the officers of the Union and some of the older statesmen began to fear that they were in for a second down-grade controversy, before the earlier breach was fully healed.' [116] The controversy was resolved only through the mediation of Dr Percy W Evans, Principal of Spurgeon's College, who urged the publication of a second pamphlet setting out the substitutionary view of the Atonement. Both were sent to the churches.

We may, therefore, suggest that the period from 1925 to 1939 was one in which the Baptist denomination sought to re-assess its national role. Yet as it did so it offered no official response to such a major social event as the 1926 General Strike, whilst temperance became the social issue on which Baptists found their most consistent voice. Despite various evangelistic programmes, moreover, numbers continued to decline: Stevenson specifically highlights the fact that Nonconformist churches in general were now failing to recruit new families. [117] Yet in the midst of such decline the Baptist churches were also deeply divided theologically. Indeed, the involvement of such figures as Tydeman Chilvers and Thomas Greenwood in the theological disputes arising from the publication of T R Glover's *Fundamentals* provides evidence of a deep concern on the part of many in the denomination that a second Downgrade Controversy might be in the offing. [118] Despite the numerical decline and theological dispute, however, the central bureaucracy continued to expand and was faced with the fact that ordinary Baptist ministers were under great pressure both of a financial nature and through spiritual disillusionment.

Baptists and Politics

In his *A Sociology of English Religion*^[119] David Martin offers a two-paragraph assessment of the religious allegiance of politicians prior to the Second World War. He argues that the distribution of religious allegiance among politicians provides: '...an excellent index of the alignment of religious forces in the overall structure of class, status and power.'^[120] He further asserts, not surprisingly, that politicians coming from the landowning classes or educated at the seven elite public schools were overwhelmingly Anglican.

Martin's analysis of the religious patterns exhibited by Prime Ministers is also significant. No dissenters had ever achieved the premiership in a Conservative government, with the possible exception of Neville Chamberlain. The latter's family connections were Unitarian and Radical. Kingsley Wood and Selwyn Lloyd did achieve the chancellorship. Baldwin's non-Anglican background was a generation in the past. But in Liberal and Labour governments the prime ministership appears to have been freely available: Campbell-Bannerman was a Presbyterian, Asquith of Congregational background, Lloyd George a Baptist (of sorts), whilst Ramsay MacDonald had connections with the Fellowship of the New Life. Bebbington has further argued that whilst 'at the end of the last century a Baptist was, almost by definition, a Liberal'^[121] matters had changed radically by the 1920s. He cites Stanley Baldwin's presence as guest of honour at a dinner held in support of the Baptist Union Superannuation Fund. Quantitative research material also reveals that immediately after the First World War Baptist voting preference in general had veered in favour of Labour.^[122]

The distribution of party membership of Baptist Members of Parliament is also significant, with the twenty Liberal MPs who served in the pre-Great War period being reduced to eight during the inter-war period. At the same time the number of Labour MPs with Baptist allegiances rose from three to eight, and after the 1931 election there were ten coalition Liberals/Liberal Nationals. This changing allegiance, argues Bebbington, was reflected in the editorial stance of the *Baptist Times*. Under Carlile that stance moved away from Shakespeare's decidedly pro-Liberal position - a stance long-courted by Lloyd George.[123]

In discussing the long-term erosion of Baptist identification with Liberalism, Bebbington argues that the fundamental explanation is to be found in the decay of communal politics.[124] Essentially, this can be considered as four-fold. Firstly, traditional Nonconformist grievances had been all but eradicated. The only major outstanding issue upon which Baptists felt aggrieved was that of education. Secondly, the social cohesion of chapel life was weakening. As the statistics in Appendix 1 indicate, a definite decline in Baptist membership and attendance figures had set in by the mid-1920s. Stevenson points out that the general decline in religion has been twofold, affecting both the allegiance and membership of the Christian churches and their role as arbiters of public conventions and private morality.[125] For example, organised sport and greater mobility - geographical and social - now affected the Baptist churches directly.[126] Linked to this was the fact that many Nonconformist churches still identified such recreations with what they perceived to be a rising tide of paganism in the nation.[127] Thirdly, social ties were changing: 'Communal politics was giving way to class politics.'[128] Not least, trade unions and the Labour Party were breaking the traditional Conservative-Liberal, Church-Chapel allegiances.[129] The result - or the

reason - was that the class-interest political parties (Labour and Conservative) found their position greatly enhanced. Fourthly, Liberalism in this period between the wars had, in Bebbington's words, 'a strange urge to self-destruction, much of the impetus coming from the convoluted manoeuvres of the practising but insincere Baptist, Lloyd George.' [130] Bebbington's succinct description of this phenomenon highlights the divisive element in Lloyd George's character, as it does the disastrous effects of his belligerence. Bebbington argues that this process was also accelerated by political circumstances. Lloyd George's decision as wartime Prime Minister of a coalition government to go to the country in 1918 still in alliance with the Conservatives clearly drove a sharp wedge into Baptist political solidarity. Some continued to follow the line taken by the *Baptist Times* in backing Lloyd George, others preferred to vote for opposition Liberal and Labour candidates, [131] but still other Nonconformists moved to the Conservatives precisely because they associated the defeat of Germany with the lead given by Conservatives in the wartime alliance. Bebbington sums up his discussion with the assertion that Baptist political activity in the twentieth century presents a rapidly changing picture. The inherited structure of communal politics, in which Baptists automatically voted Liberal, was swiftly transformed into a more complex pattern. Baptists became supporters of all three main parties, and of the Nationalists, too. Furthermore, the decline in Baptist numbers and the extension of the influence of the state encouraged some to withdraw from politics altogether. A further, theological dimension, can also be discerned. Finally, a number of public issues, international and domestic, tempted Baptists back into pressure-group politics. In essence, then, Baptists had largely become content with the structure of the state. [132]

Within this collection of reasons for the lack of consensus in post-First World War Baptist voting patterns it is arguable that theological factors became increasingly influential. The overall teaching under the banner of the Keswick Convention, premillennialism and the Scofield Reference Bible encouraged many Baptists to adopt an apoliticalism. In this movement F B Meyer became a key figure.^[133] As early as 1910 he had resolved to leave political issues to others.^[134]

Whilst theological changes were undoubtedly more rapid and more clearly defined in America at this time, Bebbington is surely correct in pointing out that as part of the evangelical world British Baptists also shared its vicissitudes.^[135] The Keswick Movement had its roots in the writings of two American evangelists who described their newly-found 'secret of victory.' W E Boardman's *A Higher Life* and Hannah Whitall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* had grown out of the authors' experiences in breaking free from a round of sin and repentance.^[136] Through this experience, they taught, one could be victorious over temptation on a regular basis. Bebbington further argues that many indigenous influences moulded this holiness teaching into its distinctive British form. Amongst these influences can be discerned the Methodist holiness tradition, Quaker spirituality, and Brethrenism - especially seen in the linking of holiness to an eschatological imperative. Keswick teaching was initially popularised in Britain by Hannah Whitall Smith and her husband, Robert Pearsall Smith. They spoke at Oxford in 1874 and Brighton in 1875, and that year also saw the first 'higher life' convention in Keswick. By the 1880s 'Keswick teaching' was also heavily imbued with adventism. This movement exercised a profound influence on many leading Baptists such as F B Meyer, W Y Fullerton, Douglas Brown and Graham Scroggie, and its wider effect upon a broad range of Baptist

ministers and churches.[137] In fact, Meyer was involved with Keswick from its earliest days, and soon his preaching began to reflect the typically Keswick emphasis on living as Christ would live.[138]

The significance of Meyer's position lies in the fact that for many evangelicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century it became the way of understanding true Christianity in a secularising society.[139] Under its influence many evangelicals - Meyer amongst them - rejected all engagement in social and political issues. In a parallel manner, some evangelicals felt compelled to reject teaching on the social gospel simply because of its association in the popular mind with socialism.[140] In fact, Cox argues, the Nonconformist tradition of Christian civic duty and social responsibility was already declining in the 1890s and that decline accelerated after 1900.[141] Yet this very concept had been the driving force behind both Anglican and Nonconformist aspirations for social order and social progress in the later Victorian era.[142] By the early 1920s, the Welsh exponent of Keswick teaching, R B Jones, even went so far as to reject the League of Nations Union as unspiritual in motive.[143]

Closely linked to the spread of this teaching was a ready acceptance of premillennialism over against post-millennialism. The latter carried with it an optimism that the Christian gospel could change society for the better. Indeed, within American Christianity it was a driving force for social engagement until the late 1870s. The acceptance of premillennialism in Britain was a complex movement. As early as the 1840s it had been a factor in the establishing of the Evangelical Alliance.[144] On the popular level D L Moody's campaigns gave him a platform for advocating this view. F B Meyer actually issued the first invitation to Moody to visit Britain - a visit which C H Spurgeon amongst others refused to support despite the fact that Spurgeon had himself adopted

premillennialism in 1861.[145] The key factor in this change of eschatological thinking was that premillennialism essentially taught the imminent return of Christ to this earth and the folly of any attempt to build a millenium here on earth in the evil times that must precede Christ's coming.

Frank goes so far as to argue that the espousing of premillennialism in America was an attempt by evangelicals to recapture control of history in the wake of the horrendous Civil War. In Britain its rise may be more closely linked to the breakdown of traditional social ties and world-views that attended the later industrial revolution. Bebbington sets the rise of premillennialism and the Keswick Movement in Britain within a cultural context - 'part of the most far-reaching cultural shift of the century'[146] - which, as in the United States, may be perceived as an escape from the battle of life into a form of romanticism.[147] Almost by definition, bad news was good news to premillennialists.[148] Although Bebbington argues that the apocalyptic atmosphere of the First World War gave rise to a specifically popular premillennialist movement,[149] there is little evidence to suggest that it had the substantial impact on the eschatological views of British evangelicals that Frank predicates for the Civil War in America. In both Britain and America, however, this premillennialism extended to dispensationalism under the influence of the teaching of J N Darby. To his mind - and that of his many followers - the forces of modernisation forced a contrast between his own quest for spiritual purity and the formalism of the mainline denominations.[150] Frank concludes that the 'rationalistic neatness and systematic comprehensiveness' of dispensationalism recommended it to evangelicals as they sought to bring history back under their control.[151]

A further key figure in the popularising of premillennial dispensationalism was C I Scofield. His influence increased during the late 1890s and early 1900s, culminating in the publication of his *Scofield Reference Bible* in 1909. Darby's views, often poorly expressed, were now presented in cut-and-dried systematic arguments.[152] Frank suggests that, in Scofield's hands, the Bible became suddenly clear, a jigsaw puzzle that men like Darby had fortunately figured out just in time to let Christians in on the secrets of the ages. To many evangelicals Scofield's notes and dispensationalism in general came with the force of a revelation: 'so that's what the Bible is all about!'[153] By the late nineteenth century, then, many evangelicals were convinced that they could not hope for a perfect, or even a better, society to grow out of their efforts. Premillennialism provided the escape from this terminally-ill world.[154]

Such notions were confirmed for many with the taking of Jerusalem by General Allenby in 1917. A L Glegg, a leading British premillennialist for the first half of this century, notes, for example, that General Allenby's entry into Jerusalem and the freeing of the city from the rule of the Turks was considered of such importance, in view of the signs concerning Christ's return, that the Advent Testimony and Preparation Movement was formed in response.[155] So imminent was the end of the age. Frank argues that in the midst of spiritual crisis the increasingly prosperous evangelicals felt that family, church, home, business, community, all demanded 'that they be competent, responsible, decisive, equal to any challenge, foresighted, resourceful, industrious and energetic, purposeful, self-controlled, and confident.'[156] These points made, it is important to note Bebbington's conclusion that the development of these ideas into fundamentalism in inter-war America had echoes in Britain, but the echoes were much softer.[157]

As to why this package of American-inspired ideas did not have the same major impact on this side of the Atlantic, Bebbington suggests that many factors were different here.[158] The entire political/religious/social amalgam was quite different; institutionally and ideologically British fundamentalism was weaker than its American counterpart; Britain lacked the American network of Bible colleges which could encourage theological separatism; the movement was less ideologically self-assured, particularly on the issue of Biblical inerrancy; moderation was more frequently a mark of the theologically conservative Baptist here than in America; and circumstances were just not suitable in Britain. Yet, weaker as it may have been, its impact on British evangelicalism was still deeply significant. In particular, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, it was a significant factor in reducing Baptist social and political commitment and in thus enabling many Baptists to move in either an apolitical or politically conservative direction.

The Nonconformist Conscience

Recent research on Nonconformity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is firmly wedded to the discussion of the nature of the Nonconformist Conscience. Some aspects of this debate have already been considered above, but for the sake of completeness the arguments must be brought together at this point. Historians have varied in their particular interpretation of the Nonconformist Conscience. Bebbington has concluded that prior to the First World War the secularising effect of politics and divisions brought by the rise of Labour resulted in some degree of Nonconformist withdrawal from politics, and this was compounded by a deepening theological commitment to separatist pietism. He further asserts

that by 1910 the period of the Nonconformist Conscience had come to an end.[159] Grievances had disappeared and issues of Old Dissent were now predominant.[160] Indeed, the decline in the Conscience was evidenced and paralleled by the decline in the Free Church Council movement.

Helmstadter, concentrating his studies on the mid-nineteenth century period of Nonconformist growth, expands on this general thesis, arguing that the Nonconformist Conscience was never, in fact, rooted in a coherent view or philosophy of society and politics.[161] Its growth is to be seen as parallel to that of New Liberalism in the same period, responding as it was to similar issues. Its genius lay in a concerted stress on individualism. Thus, matters of individual conscience - self-help, self-improvement, rejection of laziness and ill-disciplined social habits - predominated through the early and mid-Victorian era. Its decline, on the other hand, was determined by a complex of factors which included the impact of Biblical Criticism, the collapse of the innate self-confidence felt by evangelicalism (paralleling that of North American evangelicalism after the Civil War), and the meeting of demands for legal equality.[162] Under these pressures Nonconformity lost its cohesive culture. Thus, he asserts that on the eve of the First World War there were definite signs of weakness in the Nonconformist community. Yet, by the time the war had run its course, Nonconformity was no longer a major force in British public life.[163] Further, he detects a fundamental disloyalty towards the working classes which was now leading to a more fundamental breach between them and Nonconformist churches: 'On political issues which united the lower and middle classes...Nonconformity had been able to take up a clear and strong position. On issues which divided the lower and middle classes...Nonconformity was ineffectual.'[164] Thus evangelical theology faded into what he describes as a religiously indifferent social

landscape.[165] Controversially, he concludes that the Nonconformist Conscience is more accurately viewed as evidence of weakness. Free churchmen were unable to develop a new synthesis of religion, politics, and social attitudes. Whilst the Nonconformist Conscience had no future, it did, for a time, at least, enable men and women dedicated to the spirit and heritage of Dissent to keep faith with their past.[166]

Most recently, Munson sees the decline of the Nonconformist Conscience as caused by a complex accumulation of factors. He concurs with the earlier suggestion in this thesis that there was always an element of triumphalism in the statistics of Nonconformist church membership,[167] making the acerbic assessment that: 'By the turn of the century the Free Church Movement presented an imposing facade, but it was only a facade.'[168] He further categorises Nonconformists as those who, in the popular image, were marked out by their selective application of rigid rules.[169] He echoes Cox's observation that the process of acceptance into Nonconformist church life ensured that: 'those same recruits were marked off from the mass of mankind who would never enter the chapel's doors.'[170] Additionally, he sees the Boer War as having been more destructive of Free Church unity than scholars have hitherto allowed.[171] However, he argues that the final collapse of Nonconformist hopes occurred after the Great War, concluding that: 'It may well be that the War, cultural changes and political upheavals, while important, are not the cause of Nonconformity's ultimate decline.' The credit [sic] for this must rest with urbanisation.[172] The increases in Nonconformity seem to parallel rural migration, but as Nonconformity benefited from economic growth in the late Victorian era it suffered from its own prosperity and absorption into mainstream life.[173] Perhaps Hastings sums up the situation best when he asserts that each consideration on its own is

hardly decisive or adequately explanatory of a truly major shift in British religious consciousness, yet taken together they may suffice.[174]

The debate is complex. It is clear, however, that by 1910 the Nonconformist Conscience was suffering a major crisis of identity as Nonconformists began to have doubts over political involvement *per se* and about the possibly 'over-politicised' nature of Nonconformist campaigning at the expense of issues perceived as overtly 'spiritual.' They were also becoming ever more concerned with issues of personal morality and less concerned with social morality. Indeed, Kent has highlighted the fact that there was never a thorough consensus in the Nonconformist perception of its united moral stance. He argues that, in late Victorian England certainly, Nonconformists enjoyed no more of a monopoly of moral concern than one would have expected on the basis of their numerical strength within society.[175] He goes further, to pose the question of whether the Nonconformist Conscience was, in fact, a way of fighting for social objectives rather than the *cri de coeur* of an outraged morality. He concludes that the Nonconformist Conscience, as epitomised in Hughes, was an amalgam of evangelical pietism, Cobdenite radicalism and social imperialism, which to some extent reflected, and to some extent reacted against, the mental and social confusion of the late nineteenth century.[176]

It is important to unpack Kent's analysis at this point. He argues that in addition to traditional pietist dislike of theatres, ballrooms, cards, etc, had been added an implacable hatred of drink and gambling, and a renewed anxiety about protecting young Christians from the temptations of sexual laxity.[177] He further argues that as the Nonconformist type of evangelical pietism became more self-assured in the later nineteenth century so the vision of being able to exercise moral control over the

nation at large emerged: 'The demand for legislation seems much more important than its proposed content; it implied an anxiety to get control of the sources of power in late Victorian society and use them in order to compel everybody to behave as loyal nonconformists were expected to behave.' [178]

Moreover, by the close of the First World War, Nonconformity was becoming an acceptable part of the British social fabric. Yet, as Wilkinson points out - and as has been noted already in relation to Baptists in particular - that same war sowed further seeds of confusion for Nonconformists. The war had also powerfully accelerated and intensified pluralism, secularisation and the belief in modernity, which have proved to be most potent solvents of allegiance to institutional religion. Additionally, in 1918 Nonconformists were permitted to take divinity degrees at Oxford and Cambridge, and in 1920 the Welsh Church was disestablished. The ecumenical movement was also beginning to remove many of the traditional barriers between churches. [179] In a very real sense therefore, Nonconformity had lost much of its traditional *raison d'être*, whilst the Nonconformist Conscience had lost its previous context and cohesion. Indeed, Wilkinson is surely correct in asserting that the only two issues left for Nonconformists - as Nonconformists - to fight were Sabbatarianism and teetotalism, to which gambling might also be added. [180]

This section has demonstrated that the development of Baptist social and political attitudes in the 1930s took place against a medium-term context and background distinguished by a number of important trends in Nonconformist life generally and Baptist life in particular. These include a loss of sense of purpose, concern over the relationship between piety

and politics, uncertainty about whether pacifism would not have been a better policy in the Great War, the rise of class politics, and a steepening numerical decline. This sense of uncertainty provides the denominational and wider Nonconformist context for subsequent developments in the Baptist denomination in the 1930s. Before turning to these, however, the immediate context for these changes, namely the inter-war depression and slump, must be briefly examined.

The Slump

Even today, more than half a century after the events of the Thirties, the term 'the slump' continues to evoke both emotive mental images and sharp ideological passions. The context for the tumultuous events of the 1930s was set by the 1929 election. It was at that election that economic depression became a politically charged election issue for the first time. Ramsay MacDonald's Labour government had pledged itself to conquer unemployment and restore the nation's prosperity.^[181] Yet within weeks of taking office MacDonald's administration was facing serious crisis. After the initial post-war boom - largely in speculative selling of staple industries - economic decline had set in by the mid-1920s.^[182] The newer industries such as electricity supply, motor vehicle manufacture, plastics and consumer industries had begun to show real growth.^[183] The Wall Street Crash, however, brought with it chaos in the European stock markets and an attendant check in many of the major British industries. The unemployment figures began their long and inexorable rise to the peak of nearly two and three quarter million which was to be reached in 1932.

The next depressing milestone in the Labour administration's short life was the failure in May 1931 of the Vienna Bank, the Credit Anstalt. In its

wake followed a crisis of confidence in Germany and a run on the Reichsbank. Finally, the publication of the May Report on national expenditure in August 1931 revealed a serious deficit and recommended economies and new taxes. A financial crisis and a run on the reserves ensued. In disarray caused by serious differences of opinion as to the correct restorative measures which should be applied, the Labour government resigned. A small group of Labour MPs joined with MacDonald in forming a 'National' government with the Conservatives on 24 August 1931.[184] The election which followed in October 1931 confirmed the National government in office with a crushing defeat for Labour candidates. They returned only 52 candidates to Parliament.

Unemployment figures continued to rise, reaching their peak in the summer of 1932. The government's attempt to resolve the crisis was certainly far from bold. Indeed, economy measures and economic conservatism were to be the hallmark of the 9 years of National government. The psychological impact of the crisis of the slump - especially for Labour - proved an enduring one. Stevenson and Cook point out that as late as 1951 the Labour Party was still appealing to the depressing image of the slump in their election campaigning.[185] The lead-up to the 1987 and 1992 General Elections also saw such appeals to the popular imagery attached to the 1930s era.

It would be far easier for the historian if the popular image of 'the devil's decade' were, indeed, the whole truth. Yet as early as 1965 A J P Taylor was arguing that this was a parody of the true situation.[186] Priestley's *English Journey*[187] had highlighted the regional variations in social development when first published in 1934. But the significance of Taylor's work lay in the fact that he was the first historian of any repute to make such a re-evaluation. He was followed by such as C L

Mowat^[188] and R Skidelsky.^[189]

There is considerable evidence for a distinct geographical variation in patterns of economic and social depression in the Thirties. London remained comparatively well catered for in terms of employment, although even there the unemployment rate reached 13% by the mid-Thirties. By contrast South Wales witnessed unemployment rates averaging 36%, and peaking at 75% in specific areas. But even here it was largely the Merthyr, Rhondda and Aberdare valleys that were affected. The coastal areas escaped the most serious ravages of the slump.^[190] The same pattern pertained in the heavy industry regions of Scotland.

The growth in new housing stock in Croydon during the early Thirties serves as an example of the genuine prosperity which some sections of the community were beginning to enjoy in greater measure. The movement of population from depressed areas into the borough of Croydon is reflected in the membership transfers to the churches of the East Surrey Group which are discussed in detail in later chapters of this thesis. In brief it might be said here that the area yielding up most migrants to Croydon was South Wales. This local pattern reflects the wider population shift to the Midlands and the South East charted by Stevenson and many others.^[191]

It is fortunate for the purposes of research on the 1930s that by that period there already existed a sizeable body of social survey material dealing with the period immediately after the First World War.^[192] Thus by the Thirties social scientists had honed their skills considerably. Generally, unemployment was treated as only one of a range of important social issues. Only in the mid- to late-Thirties did it begin to dominate social survey discussions.

What emerged from these studies was a mixed picture, sometimes hopeful, sometimes pessimistic. As in most of the issues of this period, regional

variations were to play a major part in the analyses. Stevenson and Cook helpfully include a detailed discussion of the work of Seebohm Rowntree^[193] who had pioneered such studies in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Of particular interest in Rowntree's work was his determined attempt to construct 'poverty lines' by which standards of living might be compared. He declared this to be a minimum sum on which physical efficiency could be maintained; a standard of bare subsistence rather than living. Herbert Tout^[194] demonstrated that even in prosperous Bristol 10.7% of families fell below the poverty line.

Broadly, it might be observed that Rowntree and others were alarmed at the still serious levels of poverty obtaining in what was becoming a prosperous Britain. Old age and large numbers of children in a family were singled out as the two regularly recurring causes of poverty. Stevenson and Cook comment that one of the most striking findings of these social investigators was that the proportion of children in poverty was much greater than the proportion of families in poverty.

In the context of this present study the obvious questions arising here must concern the role of Baptist Sunday schools and Christian Endeavour groups during this period. Did they take on more of a social care function? Were outings provided free of charge for children from poorer homes? Cox argues that, certainly in Lambeth, Sunday schools were ill-disciplined and ineffective. This problem was becoming more serious as the Board schools showed increasingly how effective elementary teaching could be.^[195]

The present study of the local Baptist churches in Croydon has produced evidence in this context. Any efforts by such voluntary groups to help children must, however, be discussed in the light of evidence that the attendance of children at youth organisations in general was increasing

sharply throughout this period whilst the number of children in Sunday schools was declining. The Boys' Brigade increased its numbers from 65,000 to 161,000 (1913 to 1938), the Boy Scouts increased from 152,000 to 438,000, but Church Lads' Brigade declined from 36,000 to 20,000 (1911 to 1931), and the Army Cadet Force declined from 41,000 to 20,000 (1913 to 1939).[196] The growth in these uniformed organisations did not feed through into increased church membership. Instead, they resulted in an increasing separation of youth groups from central church structures. At the same time the percentage of the population under the age of 15 years associated with a Protestant church/Sunday school declined from 50% (1900) to 32% (1940). As a percentage of the total population the decline is even more striking, falling from 16% (1900) to 7% (1940).[197] Lindsay Glegg gives a most valuable description of this crisis first-hand.[198] To him the decline in Sunday school attendance was the more serious because he - with many other evangelicals of the period - was convinced that the Sunday school was very much the church of the future.[199]

Other researchers, such as John Boyd Orr[200] and the Coles,[201] investigated the relationship between poverty and health. Not surprisingly, their conclusions indicated that it was all but axiomatic that the poor, especially children from poor families, suffered attendant nutrition-related ill-health.[202] Ultimately this carried over into the mortality statistics for the various groups within Thirties society. Halsey's researches indicate a mortality rate higher by more than 10% for classes IV and V than for classes I to III. This effect is even more heightened if infant mortality rates are considered. For children in social classes IV and V the mortality rate was 60% higher than for classes I to III.[203] In this same context McNally's geographical comparison of infant mortality rates for 1928-33 is also of importance.[204]

Whilst it has to be acknowledged that McNally's survey covered only four cities it nevertheless must have real significance in the debate about wealth and health in the Thirties. He showed that mortality rates in northern depressed areas could be as much as 100% higher than in southern 'affluent' areas. The contrast is the more acute if allowance is made for the fact that even in affluent areas there remained pockets of high unemployment and low social conditions. In Croydon, for instance, the numbers of such socially deprived persons might be conservatively estimated to be 5-10% of the population. McNally actually observed this phenomenon in his analysis. That being the case the true contrast between southern affluence and northern deprivation was acute indeed. One can but concur with Stevenson and Cook in their conclusion that a significant proportion of people were suffering from inadequate diets and the incidence of diseases which could be related to poor nutrition was highest among the poorer income groups. Much legislation after 1939 was carefully designed to extend the income, diet and health of poorer families and their children.[205]

The fact of the slump, then, is undeniable. But despite considerable research into the period the nature of its impact is not so clear. How much Baptists were directly affected is also uncertain. This thesis will, in fact, suggest that regional and even local conditions were crucial.

The post-war boom ended, or rather, collapsed in Britain in 1921. From then until the outbreak of the Second World War high unemployment was to be the norm. For Britain the trough of this crisis was between the years 1931 and 1934. During that period the number of unemployed never fell below two million.[206] These official figures were based on those workers who were insured. Such groups as agricultural workers, the self-employed

and married women were not included in the official figures. These cumulative figures disguise the fact that the unemployment crisis was far worse in some parts of the country than others. The worst hit areas were those dependent upon the declining export industries.^[207] This phenomenon was acknowledged in the denoting of special areas in 1934 which were in receipt of financial assistance. The areas were South Wales, Tyneside, West Cumberland and industrial Scotland.

Although Northern Ireland clearly manifested the most persistently high unemployment levels for this period it was not designated a special area as this was considered to be outside the remit of Westminster. Even within the depressed areas there was variation in unemployment levels depending upon the infrastructure of each area.^[208] This phenomenon is discussed in some detail by Stevenson and Cook. The most significant point which they make is the extreme severity of the slump in some towns within a generally depressed area. Cases are cited of towns with insured worker unemployment levels well in excess of 50%. School-leavers found it particularly difficult to obtain work of any sort. Again, complex regional and local conditions varied. This thesis will argue that the extent to which Baptists were affected by unemployment was mitigated by their aspirations and success over the previous three decades.

In the 1930s, therefore, British Baptists, like other Christians, were confronted with a decade of profound, if regionally-varied, social crisis, poverty and deprivation. This period of social challenge came hard upon a period of political and theological reassessment within the denomination. In the rest of this thesis the interaction of these circumstances will be examined.

Footnotes to Chapter 1:

1. See E A Payne, *The Baptist Union - a short history* (London, 1958), pp 113 to 143. cf E A Payne, *James Henry Rushbrooke: A Baptist Greatheart* (London, 1954), pp 4ff. David Bebbington charts the broader history of evangelicalism in his *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989). On this particular period of history see: Cap 3, 'Developments in the Early Nineteenth Century' [pp 75ff], and Cap 4, 'Evangelicals and Society in the Nineteenth Century' [pp 105ff]; cf K D Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales: 1800-1930* (Oxford, 1988).
2. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 145. cf A M Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939* (London, 1960), pp 119ff.
3. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 273.
4. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 150.
5. *ibid*, p 154. cf S Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics* (London, 1975), p 10.
6. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 155.
7. J H S Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience,' in *Essays in Modern English Church History* (London, 1966), ed G V Bennett and J D Walsh, p 204.
8. Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, p 15.
9. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 158.
10. *ibid*, p 159.
11. A Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches, 1900-1945* (London, 1986), p 18.
12. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 160. cf D W Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London, 1982), pp 1ff.
13. For a deeper insight into the manner in which Free Churchmen viewed their relationship with the State during this period see H Ingli James' 'The Free Churches and the State,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1940/41, X, pp 387ff.
14. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 169. See also, James Callaghan's comments in his autobiography, *Time and Chance* (London, 1987), pp 24 to 26, 33, 36, 39ff.
15. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience,' p 188. Robin Gill very clearly highlights the psychological impact of decline on Nonconformity in his *Beyond Decline: a Challenge to the Churches* (London, 1988).
16. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience,' p 189.
17. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 170.
18. J Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society* (Oxford, 1982), p 178; cf p 273. A Hastings, *A History of English Christianity: 1920-1990* (London, 1991), pp 34ff. Hastings also helpfully analyses the geographical nature of the decline [pp 38ff].
19. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 177, 182.
20. *ibid*, pp 240f. cf J Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience: in search of a lost culture* (London, 1991), p 63.
21. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 194ff.
22. *ibid*, pp 200f.
23. *ibid*, p 201. cf p 209, and Cox's Cap 7, 'The Eclipse of Nonconformity: New Ideas and a New Generation,' pp 221ff.
24. *ibid*, pp 223f.
25. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 170, cited from E Halévy, *History of the English People* (London, 1951), 2:76. cf Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, Cap 5, 'The Nonconformists' search for dignity,' pp 129ff.

26. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 133.
27. *ibid*, p 134.
28. *ibid*, pp 135f. See, for example, Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (London, 1869), pp 26 to 31; Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, pp 67ff, 208ff.
29. M D Johnson, *The Dissolution of Dissent, 1850-1918*, (Oxford, 1987).
cf Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, pp 85ff.
30. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience,' p 204. cf
Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, pp 29ff.
31. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience,' p 204.
32. cf Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 135.
33. On the 'Passive Resisters' see also, W V Pitts, *Reflections of 90
years, 1896-1986* (Personal Publication, Windsor, 1986); Wilkinson,
Dissent or Conform? pp 19f; C Binfield, *Pastors and People: The
Biography of a Baptist Church - Queen's Road, Coventry* (Coventry,
1984), pp 89f, 108f, 115f, 119 to 138; Payne, *James Henry Rushbrooke*,
p 19; D M Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London,
1972), pp 249ff; Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, Cap 9, 'Passive
resistance and Nonconformist power, 1902-1914,' pp 244ff; Koss,
Nonconformity in Modern British Politics, pp 23ff.
34. Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, pp 39ff, 68.
35. *ibid*, p 45.
36. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 203ff.
37. cf J Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-1945* (London, 1984), pp 297f.
38. *ibid*, pp 57ff.
39. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 40.
40. *ibid*, pp 204f. cf Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, p
13. For an earlier view opposed to the strict keeping of Sunday as a
Sabbath on the premise that it put people off church-going, see: E
Miall, *The British Churches in Relation to the British People* (London,
1849), pp 167f.
41. P B Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in
England, 1780-1980* (Redhill, 1986), p 143.
42. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 40f, 85. cf Cliff,
Sunday School Movement, pp 138f; W L Miller and G Rabb, 'The Religious
Alignment of English Elections between 1918 and 1970,' *Political
Studies*, XXV, No 2, pp 227ff.
43. Cliff, *Sunday School Movement*, p 129. cf Cliff's local statistics, p 133.
44. *ibid*, p 139.
45. *ibid*, pp 141f.
46. *ibid*, pp 149, 162, 167, 178ff. On the impact of Biblical criticism, cf
Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, pp 20f; R J
Helmstadter, 'The Nonconformist Conscience,' in *Religion in Victorian
Britain: Volume IV, Interpretations*, ed G Parsons, (Manchester, 1988),
pp 69ff.
47. Cliff, *Sunday School Movement*, p 201.
48. *ibid*, p 200. cf Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp 104ff.
49. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 210.
50. Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p 105.
51. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p 124.
52. On this latter point see the illuminating study by D Hempton, '"For
God and Ulster": Evangelical Protestantism and the Home Rule Crisis of
1886,' in *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and
America, c1750-1950*, ed K Robbins (London, 1990), pp 255ff.
53. Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, p 21. cf Koss,
Nonconformity in Modern British Politics, pp 26f.
54. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 173.

55. Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, Cap 2, 'Revival and Revivalism, pp 38ff.
56. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 174.
57. Keith Clements deals with this dispute in Chapter 2 of his *Lovers of Discord* (London, 1988) entitled 'R J Campbell and the "New Theology"' (pp 19 to 48). See also: D W Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism in Inter-War Britain,' in Robbins, *Protestant Evangelicalism*, p 299; Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, pp 114ff.
58. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 174. cf D M Thompson, 'John Clifford's Social Gospel,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1986:31, pp 199 to 217.
59. The impact of Campbell's views when they became known to Congregationalists in Wales is recounted in Iain H Murray's, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, 1899-1939* (Edinburgh, 1982), p 4. The Anglican perspective is discussed by A M Ramsey in his *From Gore to Temple*, p 25. Glegg describes the effect from an independent evangelical position [A L Glegg, *Four Score..And More* (London, 1962), p 80].
60. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 179. cf Payne, *James Henry Rushbrooke*, pp 27ff.
61. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 180.
62. Cited in Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* p 23. On this complex issue see also: K Clements, 'Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War,' *Baptist Quarterly*, April 1975, XXVI:2, pp 74ff; S D Henry, 'Scottish Baptists and the First World War,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1985, XXXI:2, pp 52 to 65.
63. Cited in Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* p 24.
64. *ibid*, p 25.
65. *ibid*, p 26.
66. *ibid*. cf Hastings, *English Christianity*, p 45. Also, cf Balfour's comments on the position taken by Scottish Baptists [I L S Balfour, in *The Baptists of Scotland: A History* (Glasgow, 1988), ed D W Bebbington, p 67; cf W M S West, *To be a Pilgrim: a memoir of Ernest A Payne* (Guildford, 1983), p 11].
67. Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* p 28.
68. Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, p 101.
69. Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* p 39. Of considerable interest in this context is Clifford's diary entry for 16 November 1918. [J Marchant, *Dr John Clifford, C H* (London, 1924), p 235.] cf A J P Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965), pp 175, 188.
70. Cited in: Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-1945*, p 50.
71. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 100ff.
72. See: Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, pp 236f. cf Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, pp 28f.
73. Payne, *James Henry Rushbrooke*, p 23.
74. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 185. See also, Roger Hayden's 'Still at the Crossroads - Revd J H Shakespeare and Ecumenism,' in *Baptists and the Twentieth Century* (London, 1982), pp 31 to 54; J H Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Crossroads* (London, 1918); Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' p 300. For the official *Reply of the Churches in Membership with the Baptist Union to the 'Appeal to all Christian People'* issued by the Lambeth Conference of 1920, see: Payne, *The Baptist Union* pp 279 to 282; cf Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp 97f; West, *To be a pilgrim*, pp 19f, 389ff; T H Darlow, *William Robertson Nicholl: Life and Letters* (London, 1925), *passim*; Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, Cap 6, 'The move to unity,' pp 157ff; E K H Jordan, *Free Church Unity: History of the Free Church Council Movement, 1896-1941* (London, 1956), Cap 7, 'Towards a United Free Church,' pp 127ff, 168ff; M West, 'The Reverend Secretary

- Aubrey: Part 3, ' *Baptist Quarterly*, XXXIV:7, pp 320ff.
75. R Mudie Smith, *The Religious Life of London* (London, 1903).
 76. *ibid*, p 27.
 77. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, p 367.
 78. H Macleod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London, 1974), *passim*.
 79. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*. cf Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp 42f.
 80. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 92.
 81. *ibid*, pp 226f.
 82. *ibid*, p 95.
 83. *ibid*, pp 136ff; 247ff.
 84. *ibid*, p 151.
 85. Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, pp 17ff, 29.
 86. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 153f.
 87. *ibid*, p 154.
 88. *ibid*, p 155.
 89. Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, p 12.
 90. Aubrey to S W Hughes, 11/6/35.
 91. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 156.
 92. *ibid*, p 159. cf Miller and Raab, 'Religious Alignment at English Elections,' pp 229f; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p 176; Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, pp 46ff; B Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (London, 1971); A E Dingle, *The Campaign for Prohibition in Victorian England* (London, 1980); Helmstadter, 'Nonconformist Conscience,' pp 181ff.
 93. Gordon, in *The Baptists in Scotland*, pp 51 to 54.
 94. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 170.
 95. *ibid*, p 172.
 96. *ibid*, p 174.
 97. *ibid*, p 174. cf Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, p 59.
On F B Meyer, see most recently: I Randall, 'More Denominationalism: F B Meyer and Baptist Life,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1993, XXXV:1, pp 20ff.
 98. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 175.
 99. See, for example, his *Reflections of 90 years* (Windsor, 1986), pp 8 to 21.
 100. *ibid*, pp 11f.
 101. *ibid*, p 13.
 102. *ibid*, p 19. In contrast to Pitts' view, see, for example: *Rev Andrew Clark's War Diary*, MS English History el14 ff 88-88v, Bodleian Library.
 103. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, p 362. 30.58% of men aged 20 to 24 in 1914, and 28.15 of those aged 13 to 19 in 1914 were killed during the war. In Croydon alone, 25,000 men served in the Armed Forces; 2,500 were killed; and 10,000 were wounded. The local history of the war could but exclaim: 'Without doubt the World War...was the greatest crime in history.' [ed H K Moore, *Croydon and the Great War* (Croydon, 1920), p 13.] cf Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp 126ff.
 104. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, p 357.
 105. cf Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 93.
 106. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p 19.
 107. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 22f.
 108. In Payne's judgement: 'From the close of the first World War until his death in 1947, Rushbrooke must be judged to have been probably the most influential single figure within the Baptist community.'

109. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 197.
110. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' in *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1983), p 85.
111. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 201.
112. *ibid*, 202. cf Brown, *Nonconformist Ministry*, Cap 4, 'An Unsettled Ministry,' pp 124ff; p 161.
113. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 203.
114. See specific notes on the involvement of the churches of Croydon, *infra*. cf Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, Cap 12, 'The Intellectual Background,' pp 221ff.
115. See: Payne, *The Baptist Union*, pp 205f.
116. H G Wood, *Terrot Reaveley Glover: a Biography* (Cambridge, 1953), p 161. For details of the various attacks launched on Glover over the years by more 'fundamentalist' Baptists, see: Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' pp 317ff.
117. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, pp 358f.
118. Morris West shares this opinion in his 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey: Part 1,' *Baptist Quarterly*, XXXIV:5, 1992, p 204.
119. David Martin, *A Sociology of English Religion* (London, 1967).
120. *ibid*, p 49.
121. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 76.
122. M James, 'Baptist Political attitudes, with special reference to the late nineteenth century' (Leeds MA, 1968).
123. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' pp 77 to 79.
124. *ibid*, p 79.
125. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, p 357.
126. *ibid*, p 359.
127. *ibid*, p 360.
128. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 79. This decline has been charted more fully in J F Glaser's 'English Nonconformity and the Decline of Liberalism,' *American Historical Review*, 1958, pp 63ff.
129. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, pp 358f.
130. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 80. See also: Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-15*, p 367; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p 23.
131. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 80. cf Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, pp 312ff. This is also the view posited by Steven Constantine of the University of Lancaster [Personal correspondence, July 1992].
132. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' pp 89f. On this entire discussion, see also: T J Nossiter, 'Recent work on English elections, 1832-1935,' *Political Studies*, 1970, XXVII, pp 525ff.
133. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 82. cf E E Cairns, *The Christian in Society* (Chicago, 1973), pp 164ff.
134. Hastings, *English Christianity*, p 126.
135. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' p 297. See also: Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, Cap 5, 'Holiness unto the Lord: Keswick and its Context in the Later Nineteenth Century' [pp 151ff].
136. D W Frank, *Less than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids, 1986), p 133. See also: Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp 164ff.
137. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp 151ff, 165, 193.
138. See, for example F B Meyer, *Step into the Blessed Life* (Philadelphia, 1896), p 121. See also: Glegg, *Four Score...And More*, pp 56ff.
139. Frank, *Less than Conquerors*, p 115.
140. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' p 215. cf D M Thompson, 'The Emergence of the Nonconformist Social Gospel in England,' in,

Robbins, *Protestant Evangelicalism*, pp 255ff; W Y Fullerton, *F B Meyer: a biography* (London, nd), p 138; Jordan, *Free Church Council Movement*, pp 153ff; H H Rowdon, 'Albert Swift: A Social Gospeller at Westminster Chapel?' *Vox Evangelica*, XV, 1985, pp 111ff. This latter paper affords a particularly good analysis of changes in the evangelical position on social engagement between the wars.

141. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 129.
142. *ibid*, p 128.
143. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' p 312.
144. J Wolffe, 'The Evangelical Alliance in the 1840s,' in *Voluntary Religion*, ed W J Shiels and D Ward (Oxford, 1986), p 341.
145. Frank, *Less than Conquerors*, p 33. See also: Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' p 309; Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp 90f.
146. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p 169. cf Cliff, *Sunday School Movement*, pp 139ff.
147. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp 165ff.
148. Frank, *Less than Conquerors*, p 68. cf Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p 165.
149. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' pp 310f.
150. Frank, *Less than Conquerors*, p 70.
151. *ibid*, p 73.
152. *ibid*, pp 77f.
153. *ibid*, p 74.
154. *ibid*, p 140.
155. A L Glegg, *Four Score..And More*, p 32. cf Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p 193.
156. Frank, *Less than Conquerors*, p 158.
157. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' p 297.
158. *ibid*, pp 320ff. cf Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp 217ff. cf M Volf, 'The Challenge of Protestant Fundamentalism,' in *Fundamentalism as an Ecumenical Challenge* (London, 1992), eds H Kung & J Moltmann.
159. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, pp 159f. See his Cap 8, 'The End of the Conscience,' pp 153ff.
160. *ibid*, pp 30ff, 46ff, 51ff, 53, 57ff.
161. Helmstadter, 'Nonconformist Conscience,' p 65 f. For a lively critique of Helmstadter's thesis, see: G Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: The Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity,' in *Religion in Victorian Britain: Volume 1, Traditions*, ed Parsons (Manchester, 1988), pp 67ff, especially, pp 86ff.
162. Helmstadter, 'Nonconformist Conscience,' pp 69ff.
163. *ibid*, p 83.
164. *ibid*, pp 92ff.
165. *ibid*, p 95.
166. *ibid*, p 95.
167. J Munson, *The Nonconformist Conscience: in search of a lost culture* (London, 1991), pp 9ff
168. *ibid*, p 179. cf his Cap 8, 'Nonconformists and their peculiar conscience,' pp 204ff.
169. *ibid*, p 241.
170. *ibid*, p 51.
171. *ibid*, pp 236ff.
172. *ibid*, pp 295, 301.
173. *ibid*, pp 304f.
174. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p 271.
175. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience,' pp 181f.
176. *ibid*, pp 184f. cf C Binfield, *So down to prayers: Studies in English*

- Nonconformity, 1780-1920* (London, 1977).
177. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience,' p 185. On gambling, cf E B Perkins, *Gambling in English Life* (London, 1950).
 178. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience,' p 187.
 179. *ibid*, pp 66ff. cf Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 257ff.
 180. Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* pp 58 to 61.
 181. J Stevenson & C Cook, *The Slump: Society and Politics During the Depression* (London, 1977), p 1. See also Stuart Ball's *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: the Crisis of 1929-1931* (Yale, 1988), *passim*; S Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain between the Wars* (London, 1980); S Constantine, *Social Conditions in Britain, 1918-1939* (London, 1983).
 182. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-1945*, p 107.
 183. *ibid*, pp 109ff.
 184. Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p 2.
 185. *ibid*, p 4.
 186. See, for example: Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945*, p 317.
 187. J B Priestley, *English Journey* (London, 1934).
 188. C L Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940* (London, 1968).
 189. R Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump* (London, 1967).
 190. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, pp 266ff, 272.
 191. *ibid*, pp 144ff.
 192. For example, both the *Social Survey of Merseyside* and *The New Survey of London Life and Labour* had been started during the 1920s.
 193. Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, pp 32ff.
 194. *ibid*, p 33.
 195. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 95ff.
 196. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, p 245. cf Cox, *English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp 213ff.
 197. ed P Brierley, *A Century of British Christianity: Historical Statistics 1900-1985 with projections to 2000* (London, 1989), p 48.
 198. Glegg, *Four Score..And More*, pp 12f, 23.
 199. *ibid*, pp 19f.
 200. J Boyd Orr, *Food, Health and Income* (London, 1936).
 201. G D H and M Cole, *The Condition of Britain*, (London, 1937).
 202. Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p 40.
 203. A H Halsey, *Trends in British Society since 1900* (London, 1972), pp 341f. Cited in Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p 283.
 204. C E McNally, *Public Ill-Health* (London, 1935). Cited in Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p 285.
 205. *ibid*, pp 44f.
 206. Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p 54.
 207. *ibid*, p 286.
 208. *ibid*, pp 56ff. cf Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp 245f.

CHAPTER 2

Identifying the Issues: January to December 1930

It has already been noted that the 1930s opened with a number of crucial social, political and spiritual issues facing the British Baptist churches. In this chapter some of these issues will be examined as they were debated during 1930 in order both to set these key themes within the wider national and international contexts, and also to link the 1930s with the decades preceding. For convenience these items have been grouped under the headings of National and International Affairs. Sources for this section have been the 'official' documents of the Baptist Union. These include the *Baptist Times*, *Baptist Union Annual Reports* and Assembly literature. They have been used in order to ascertain the 'official' stance of the Union on major themes affecting the denomination in the Thirties. These observations will then be used as a foil against which to test the conclusions which will be drawn from more local studies.

National Affairs

The decade began on a note of numerical gloom for Baptists. On 9 January 1930 a page 3 feature in the *Baptist Times* outlined a decrease in the membership of the Baptist churches of 4,435 (from 411,389 to 406,954)^[1], and a decrease in Sunday school scholars of 11,138 (from 500,080 to 488,942). No comment was made on these statistics. The 16 January edition moved the feature onto page 1 with an unattributed leading article beginning: 'The statistics of the religious life of the country during 1929 are now published. They are depressing reading; it is no consolation

that other churches are no better off than ourselves. No doubt the apostles of comfort will find all-sufficient reasons for things being as they are, but we confess more than uneasiness.'[2] Among the searching and, from the point of view of this study, pertinent, questions asked by this author was: 'Are we spending our strength upon what Mr Birrell [veteran ex-Liberal MP and son of the minister of Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool] describes as "the pulpit attempt at an attenuated social salvation"?'[3]

Not surprisingly, a fierce debate followed. The Union Secretary, M E Aubrey, called for thorough and honest revision of church rolls in an attempt to determine the real extent of Baptist strength. Dismissing facile solutions he asserted: 'That Church which is intent on winning the outsiders will find that the level of its own faith and joy, its whole life, will be immeasurably raised.'[4] Much correspondence, a number of feature articles, and even a symposium, were generated. The Union President for 1929-30, Dr Douglas Brown, agreed with Aubrey that a failure in evangelism lay at the root of the problem.[5] 'We are not starting new centres of worship and service,' asserted Dr Charles Brown, former minister of Ferme Park Baptist Church and President of the Free Church Federal Council in 1930.[6] Prayer, brotherhood and zeal were lacking, suggested the minister of Cleethorpes Baptist Church, F G Kemp.[7] 'Why, then, do not the Free Church leaders join hands and bring into being one United Free Church of England?'[8] asked the leading London Baptist layman, Herbert Chown. In making this point Chown was raising an issue that had been under regular debate since the Lambeth Appeal of 1920.[9] It was to remain a point of contention for the opening months of 1930.[10] Writing a year or so later Dr Henry Townsend from the Manchester College argued that to unite with Anglicans was not possible because of their

patronising intolerance of Baptists. 'My own attitude to Anglicanism,' he explained, 'is considerably influenced by the injustices she still inflicts on Free Churchmen and others.'^[11] Presbyterianism, meanwhile, was too much linked with Scottish traditions. And so far as Congregationalists were concerned paedobaptism would be the issue of dissent. He concluded: 'The urgent task is that we should continue to love and cooperate with each other, to do our own work worthily...'

Interestingly, the Baptist Union President for 1930-31, Arthur Newton (a deacon at York Road Baptist Church, Battersea, and treasurer of the London Baptist Association), took for his theme, 'The Efficient Church'.^[12] His address was reflected in the *Annual Report* which, under the title 'The Main Business of the Church,' argued that: 'While it is obviously dangerous to press the parallel between the business life of the outside world and the tasks of the Church, we may, nevertheless, ask ourselves if it is reasonable to continue our methods unchanged...'^[13]

Significantly for the purposes of this present study, no analysis of the social dimension of the church's ministry appeared in these reports. The solution to the problems assailing the Baptist denomination was perceived in terms of renewed evangelism and/or a more efficient style of church leadership and management. It is also interesting to notice the manner in which the *Baptist Times* perhaps unwittingly gave the impression that the problems which Baptist churches were facing were unique to them. This was not the case, however. A year later, in June 1931 for example, the *Croydon Advertiser* carried a feature on the declining numbers of members in Anglican churches. Under the headline, 'Bishop's Warning - Church Losing Ground in Poorer Parishes - More Clergy Needed,' it reported an address by the Bishop of Southwark, Dr C F Garbett, about: 'the grave position of the Church of England in the poor parishes.' He was concerned at the

understaffing of Church of England parishes - at least 1,100 more clergy were needed. But the general problem of understaffing was accentuated by the difficulty faced by the church in filling vacancies in poorer areas: 'It was in those parishes, overcrowded and poor, where the shortage of clergy was most marked, far more than in the prosperous districts in the suburbs...It was useless to disguise the gravity of the situation. The Church was losing ground in many of the poorer parishes.' [14]

A measure of the importance attached to this issue by contemporary Baptist leaders can be seen in the fact that as 1930 drew to a close the Council of the Baptist Union resolved to include a discussion of the problem in their *Annual Report*. Reflecting on the continuing decline in numbers they commented:

'We have in former years uttered warnings against too great an emphasis on mere figures. The quality of our membership is of more importance than numbers. Periods do undoubtedly come in the history of the Christian Church when the vine is pruned. Dead wood has to be cut out. The Churches in this country have in recent days been passing through such a time. When the Church is manifestly succeeding it becomes popular and attracts many who have no vital religious experience. These become a source of weakness rather than strength, and the power of the Church declines. Those whose religion is formal or casual, a mere matter of custom or expediency, fall away, as they did in the days of our Lord. Numbers are reduced, but "the remnant that remains" is the real Church, and our hope is there. That Church, with the life of Christ beating in it, must grow.

'For years we have had to register a decline in our statistics. Last

year it was so small that we hoped we had reached the bottom of the curve, and this year [1931] we should find an upward movement had begun. Our figures do give us encouragement for we can record, with thankfulness, that in England, to which by far the greater number of Churches in our Union belong, we register an increase of 1,004. Ireland also shows a small advance of 29. Unfortunately the figures for Wales and Scotland show a diminution, partly or wholly due to migration, so that, for the whole of the British Isles, we are faced with a net loss, in numbers, of 126.'[15]

The urgency in this debate at a national level was caused in part by the fact that at a local level few Baptist churches achieved a peak in membership after 1929. Indeed, many were already conscious of falling numbers both of members and adherents. L G Champion has tested national statistical trends against those for the Bristol Baptist Association which for 300 years had been one of the strong centres of Baptist church life in England. His studies indicate a stark decline in all statistics with the added observation that by 1981, the end of his study Baptist congregations were more restricted to members, with a small number of people who shared regularly in the fellowship without becoming members.[16] In the London context, just three examples, from many available, must serve as illustrations. Fillebrook Baptist Church reached its peak membership in the late 1920s.[17] Ilford High Road Baptist Church had grown from 169 members in 1900 to 514 in 1921. Its pre-war Sunday school attracted some 600 children. Yet within half a decade decline had set in.[18] The same pattern pertained at Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church.[19]

The second issue facing Baptists as the 1930s opened was that of

redefining their political position. As noted in the previous chapter, there was a sense of political disillusionment apparent in the Baptist churches by 1930 due in part to the continued failure of the Liberal Party to retake any radical stance, and due in large measure to concern as to the degree of trust that could safely be placed in Lloyd George. The fact that most of the older radical issues had been satisfactorily resolved seemed to matter little to some.[20]

Yet other factors were beginning to confuse the issue. For example, support was offered by the *Baptist Times* in the early 1930s for Philip Inman, a good Nonconformist, and prospective Labour MP for Middlesborough West.[21] This support was veritably glowing in the 20 February 1930 issue, where he was described as: 'a great-hearted, lovable man, who is known to, and affectionately recalled by, thousands of his fellow-countrymen.'[22] Such support ceased forthwith, however, in the wake of a solemn report on 13 March 1930 stating that Inman had campaigned on a Sunday.[23]

In early 1930 Lloyd George was still held in great awe by many Baptists, and his speeches of 1929 were admired by a *Baptist Times*[24] correspondent reviewing his political form of that year. His recent speech on the subject of Empire Free Trade[25] was described as brilliant, 'sparkling with wit and epigram.' He was still popularly perceived as a defender of the masses against price increases.[26] His 'wonderful career' of forty years in Parliament was happily commented upon in both the 17 April and 12 June copies of the *Baptist Times*[27] and in May 1930 it was announced that he would address the Baptist Union of Wales Assembly to be held the following September in his home town of Portmadoc.[28] There is clear evidence to indicate that some, perhaps many, Baptists longed for a revival of Liberal fortunes under Lloyd George.[29]

In the light of unemployment relief costing an estimated £200 a minute, a surmised Liberal/Labour coalition under the joint leadership of Lloyd George and MacDonald was discussed in the 4 September issue of the *Baptist Times*.^[30] However, before year's end, clear notes of criticism of Lloyd George were emerging. In September 1930 he had appealed for electoral reform, to which the *Baptist Times* retorted: 'He did not complain when the luck of the game went in his favour.'^[31] Again, in December 1930, having denounced Lloyd George's tactics in Parliament, the *Baptist Times* asked why he maintained in office a government of which he was so apparently critical.^[32] On the wider Liberal front, concern was expressed at the rifts in the party^[33] and what was perceived to be its failed radicalism.^[34] Lord Grey, one-time Liberal MP and now Chancellor of Oxford University, was almost routinely criticised.^[35] Not infrequently the question of whether the Liberal Party even had a future was posed.^[36]

A position strongly in favour of Empire Free Trade was adopted by the denomination's spokesmen throughout 1930.^[37] Baldwin was criticised by one correspondent for his protectionism,^[38] the correspondent concluding: 'If he goes to the country on that programme, he will be courting the same disaster as overwhelmed him in 1923.' However, the fierce tone of criticism had mellowed by October of the same year,^[39] the need for public economies being stressed quite firmly.^[40] Indeed, the year ended on a note of political gloom: 'While all three parties are scoring dialectical triumphs in Parliament, the position gets continually worse...And Nero fiddles while Rome is burning.'^[41]

The third key issue to be considered in this thesis is that of the social stance taken by Baptists *vis-a-vis* the gathering economic crisis. Surprisingly little of any moment was reported or written in the *Baptist*

Times regarding the national social conditions pertaining in 1930. A single column on 16 January outlined moral conditions, and called for a social probe.[42] There were also numerous references to unemployment.[43] The general editorial position could be described under six principles: the status of the poor should be respected;[44] the poor should be defended;[45] any response to social issues should be all-party in nature;[46] unemployment has a world cause;[47] thrift should be encouraged;[48] entertainments should be forgone.[49] Significantly, no official reference was made to current economic crisis in the Baptist Union Assembly of 1930. The *Annual Report*, however, did refer to the severe economic climate, but even that reference was only in passing.[50]

There is little information recorded in the denominational journal pertaining to the active response of Baptist churches to the meeting of social needs. Only one reference has been found in the 1930 editions of the *Baptist Times* to a church offering gifts to the underprivileged.[51] Similarly, of the many local histories of Baptist churches in London very few even refer to the Thirties except to pick up the themes of evangelism and impending war. This may well reflect omissions on the part of the local historians, but may have some wider significance in terms of what the church tradition has perceived to have been important in its history. London Baptist churches whose histories contain no reference to the social conditions of the day, let alone the church's response, include: Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church;[52] New Park Road Baptist Church, Brixton Hill;[53] Chingford Mount Baptist Church;[54] Devonshire Place Baptist Church;[55] Park Baptist Church, Brentford;[56] Camden Road Baptist Church;[57] Battersea Baptist Chapel;[58] Alperton Baptist Church;[59] Penge Baptist Church;[60] New Malden Baptist Church;[61] Bunyan Baptist Church, Kingston-on-Thames;[62] Goodmayes Baptist Church;[63] Highams Park

Baptist Church;[64] Kenton Free Church, Baptist;[65] Camm Hall Road Baptist Church;[66] Balham Baptist Church;[67] Barking Baptist Tabernacle;[68] Carshalton Beeches Baptist Free Church;[69] Catford Hill Baptist Church;[70] Brownhill Baptist Church, Hither Green;[71] Dawes Road Baptist Church, Fulham;[72] Norbury Baptist Church;[73] Hounslow Baptist Church;[74] Ferme Park Baptist Church;[75] Fillebrook Baptist Church, Leytonstone;[76] Lewisham Road Baptist Church, Greenwich;[77] Rayners Lane Baptist Church, Harrow;[78] Battersea Chapel.[79]

There were, however, some churches which were deeply aware of and responsive to the prevailing conditions in the early 1930s. For example, the local history of Lordship Lane Baptist Church, Dulwich, contains a section dealing with the depression of the 1930s. The church was already involved with the poor, and in 1931 a week of prayer was called specifically to seek God's help for the nation. In that same year it was resolved to give the harvest festival gifts to the needy within the church and then to the local workhouse, and not to sell them as in previous years. The church was also involved in the Free Church Council appeal for the local unemployed centre.[80] At this time the East London Tabernacle - under Geoffrey King - employed two deaconesses, a nurse and a London City Missionary. It also grew from 329 members in 1934 to 461 members in 1939.[81] Ilford High Road Baptist Church had run a Blanket Fund throughout the 1920s (blankets were loaned for 6d per winter). Raymond Bolton's *175 Years of History: Ilford High Road Baptist Church* considered in detail the impact on and response of the church to the slump.[82] Bloomsbury Central Church - under the motto, 'Fellowship' - had a wide-ranging social ministry throughout the 1930s.[83]

Some churches may, of course, have been reticent in advertising their charity. Certainly, considerable sums were given during the year for the

South Wales Flood Relief Fund, and eyewitness reports on this topic appear to have been eagerly read.^[84] The fact that some chapel histories include such references to the social issues of the 1930s, however, renders the silence of the majority of such texts the more striking.

It was also reported by the *Baptist Times* that F N Charrington, the "beer heir", had spent sixty years in the service of the poor through the Tower Hamlets Mission.^[85] In this context it may be observed that most weeks' editions of the *Baptist Times* carried advertisements for poor-relief missions.^[86] There can be no doubt that for many Baptists, involvement in these missions was seen as the most effective means of caring for the poor whilst not disrupting their own church programmes with activities specially designed for the underprivileged.

Having made these comments on the major social issues facing Britain in the 1930s, it is also important to be reminded of Bebbington's observation that: 'there was...a set of social issues over which Baptists felt and often spoke intensely. These were the problems which, unlike unemployment or housing, could be analysed in terms of personal responsibility.'^[87] These issues included, notably, alcohol abuse, Sunday desecration and gambling.

Thus 1930 opened with Baptists continuing their longstanding concern over alcohol abuse. Few actual articles appeared in the *Baptist Times* on the subject, but there was quite extensive reporting of the current state of affairs. Dr S W Hughes, giving his annual survey of the year 1929 from the pulpit of Westbourne Park Chapel, Paddington, argued for 'three things Britain must do for the Empire's well-being.'^[88] He reasoned that science, economics and morality all demanded the ultimate abolition of the drink traffic; that humanity needed strong Christian leadership in matters of world disarmament and peace; and that Britain needed the dynamic power

of Christian faith. He scathingly accused the Labour administration of being too concerned with the revenue generated by the drink trade instead of fulfilling its electoral mandate of 'Employment.' He suggested that the £300m per annum spent on alcohol could be rechanneled into the consumer market, generating a recovery and saving £60m per annum cost of unemployment. In impassioned style he concluded: '"If we could abolish the liquor traffic!" The very dream should enthuse us...and above all we believe that God, who cares for the unemployed, for drink-desolated lives, and for wronged children crouching in disadvantaged homes, calls us forward into the final stages of this conflict.'

A number of other references can be adduced indicating that the editorial position of the *Baptist Times* for this period was still essentially abstentionist. For example, on 16th January^[89] the paper reported with some pleasure that a report had just been published noting the increasing sobriety of British society. A month later^[90] the *Baptist Times*, carried a scathing satire on the theme of "Guinness". This was followed on 27 March^[91] by a sarcastic report on the views of the licensed victuallers as presented to the Licensing Commission. The annual report of the Temperance Committee stated that some 7,000 Baptist Sunday school scholars had signed the pledge in 1929.^[92] Other *Baptist Times* reports commented on the State sale of alcohol;^[93] the 1930 Temperance Conference;^[94] the Baptist Union Assembly 4th Session, ('Youth and Temperance');^[95] 'The Brewers and the Exchequer';^[96] the Royal Commission on alcohol;^[97] and evidence given before the Royal Commission).^[98]

A further facet to debates over social issues remained that of education. As noted in Chapter 1 of this thesis, education had long been a point of contention for Baptists and their fellow Nonconformists. As late

in the decade as January 1937, Dr Henry Townsend attempted a review and history of the debate from 1906 onwards. The basic Baptist thesis is to be found in a letter to the editor of the *Baptist Times* published on 2 January 1930. One G J Long argued that Baptists should struggle for: '(1) No sectarian teaching; (2) no sectarian control of public money; (3) and no sectarian tests for teachers.' [99] Following criticism of the 1906-10 Liberal administration, Long asserted that: 'Labour may be trusted to defend the poorest in the community from clerical and self-interested domination.'

Once again the *Baptist Times* provided a platform for a wide range of writers and correspondents. Arthur Cayley Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester, was marshalled to support the Nonconformists in opposition to religious tests within the education system. Indeed, he went so far as to argue for the total removal of religious education from schools, concluding his article: 'The Churches, Established and Free, must do their own work and not expect to proselytize at the expense of the State.' [100] The magnitude of the problem for Nonconformists was brought home to the readership of the *Baptist Times* by a report on 30 January 1930 in which it was stated that there were some 6,000 single-school areas where schools were under the control of the local clergyman. There were also 12,000 schools supported by public money whose headteacher had to be either an Anglican or a Roman Catholic. [101]

The *Baptist Times* also took an interest in the drawing up of the 1930 Education Bill, and Baptists lobbied actively during its detailed stages. Whilst giving its general support to the Bill the *Baptist Times* had to state (in emphasis): 'We Shall Never Agree to the Imposition of Religious Tests,' [102] the Baptist Union *Annual Report* for 1930 going on to record: 'The Baptist Union, through the General Secretary, has felt it to be a

duty to resist the demands and has represented to the government that Baptists cannot agree to religious tests being applied to what are virtually civic posts...'[103] This was, in fact, a reflection of a resolution passed at the Baptist Union Assembly of that year. Under the heading, 'Declaration on the Subject of National Education,' it was recorded of the Assembly delegates that: 'They reaffirm their adherence to the ideal of a completely unified system of National Education under complete public control, and recall that the grievances imposed or perpetuated by the legislation of 1902-1903 remain unredressed.'[104] This debate also drew condemnation of the Liberal Party in terms echoing a forlorn sadness at the indisputable passing of a golden age:

'What had happened to the Liberal Party? Where are the men who were regarded as our leaders in politics? We can imagine the speeches that would have been made five and twenty years ago. What a blaze there would have been! Nonconformity would have spoken with no uncertain sound. Last Friday it did not speak at all...The Liberal Party has stood for freedom. Mr Lloyd George came into the public gaze in the fight for religious freedom...'[105]

Finally, under the heading 'The Massacre of the Innocents,' it was recorded on 3 July 1930 that the Education Bill had been shelved: 'with not a little relief in view of the government's insistence upon ecclesiastical tests.'[106]

Not surprisingly, the war debate was to prove the most significant international issue for Baptists throughout the Thirties. In 1930 the Naval Conference was reported weekly, with a number of leading articles and comments.[107] Prayers were requested for the conference,[108] and the failure of the conference was a cause of considerable concern. This failure was firmly attributed by the *Baptist Times* to France and Italy.[109]

Significantly, the failure of the Naval Conference proved a fillip to the British Women's Baptist League who were pledged to the 'greatest of all Christian movements, i.e. the movement for World-Wide Peace.'[110] There is some evidence to show that the failure of the Naval Conference had a profound effect upon ordinary people at a local level. It was firmly exploited, for example, in a speech delivered in South Norwood in mid-September 1930, where Charles James Simmons, the Labour MP for Erdingly and a Great War invalid, made a fierce attack on capitalism as a potent cause of war. He called for total disarmament as the only sure way to world peace. The *Croydon Advertiser* report of the meeting noted Simmons' assertion that:

'The Independent Labour Party had a record of war-resistance second to none in this country or anywhere else in the world. When, during the war, the Archbishop of Canterbury blessed the guns, and the Bishop of London strutted about like a peacock in khaki, delivering recruiting speeches, Messrs Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden went about preaching the gospel of Christ...Mr Simmons attributed the failure of the Naval Conference to the voice the experts had in it. What could be

expected when the same men who advised Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland in the last Government advised Miss Bondfield now? "We ought to have cleared the whole lot out long ago", said Mr Simmons. There was only one way to make peace certain, and that was by total disarmament. One nation must give the lead, and he believed that Great Britain could do this.'[111]

In the Baptist context, this general longing for a return to the 'old ways' of pacifism resulted in the formation in 1931 by the Rev W H Hayden (minister of Salem Baptist Church, Burton-on-Trent) of the Baptist Peace Fellowship[112] and reflected the widespread sympathy for pacifism felt by many Baptists.[113] It is significant that the *Baptist Quarterly* for 1930/31 carried an article by W T Whitley on 'Four Centuries of Pacifism'[114] which outlined the attitude of Baptists *a propos* warfare since their earliest days. So strong did the debate become that Baptist churches even split over this issue. Wallace Vellam Pitts refers to the split which eventually occurred in his home church - East Hill, Wandsworth - over the pacifist issue. He records that 'Ultimately I became a member of the break-away [pacifist] Church...There were hot arguments...The gap was never bridged.'[115]

In general the debate during 1930 proved fiercely critical of the government. Thus the 'Hymn of Peace' was commended,[116] and a major *Baptist Times* feature on 'The Churches and War' took a broadly pacifist position.[117] Regular reports were made on the present status of Baptists *vis-a-vis* the League of Nations,[118] and the famous 'Peace Poem' received strong denominational commendation.[119] As the year proceeded alarm was expressed at expenditure on arms,[120] the Naval and Air estimates giving particular cause for concern.[121] The mass parade for peace by members of

all churches was also reported by the *Baptist Times*.^[122] Indeed, widening the debate for a moment from Britain alone, concern was also expressed at militarism on the Continent, and in Germany and Italy in particular.^[123]

Secondly, on the international front, British Baptists remained deeply concerned with the persecution of their co-religionists in Russia. Bebbington has suggested that: 'The sufferings of Baptists in Russia, though acute after 1929, were relatively little known.'^[124] This present research indicates that there was more concern than might at first appear. Such was the level of interest that as early as 1914 the Kingsgate Press, based at Baptist Union headquarters in WC1) had published *The Soul of Russia* by C T Byford (then Baptist World Alliance Commissioner for Europe). The *Baptist Times* for 1930 carried a number of major features on religion in Russia.^[125] Also, general reports (including reports of protest rallies)^[126] indicate that British Baptists actively supported their persecuted brethren in financial ways.^[127]

The Liberal MP, Geoffrey Shakespeare - like his father before him - asked the Foreign Office to attempt to protect Russian Baptists from persecution, but to no avail.^[128] This concern was echoed in the Baptist Union *Annual Report* for 1930 in which J H Rushbrooke (General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance) reported that the country: 'is still closed and the news is bad.'^[129] Bebbington points out that Rushbrooke was the most consistent in pleading the cause of the religious minorities in Eastern Europe, although most of his efforts were behind closed doors.^[130] Similarly, the Baptist World Alliance Congress carried major features and reports in both 1934^[131] and 1939^[132].

This concern for their co-religionists in Russia was part of a broader interest in the internal state of that nation felt by many who were

politically active at the time. The overthrow of the Romanovs had been greeted with considerable jubilation by the British Left, Ramsay MacDonald, for example, exclaiming that: 'a sort of spring-tide of joy had broken out all over Europe.'^[133] In his 'Seeing the Future: British Left-Wing Travellers to the Soviet Union, 1919-32,'^[134] F M Leventhal has shown how confused the wider British public was about the real situation within the Bolshevik system. This confusion was caused, in large measure at least, by the lack of objective media information in Britain. The Left was not uncritical of the Bolshevik revolutionary tactics, yet it still had few channels through which it could inform the British public.

A notable Christian ally of Baptists who tried to redress the balance was the Anglican socialist George Lansbury. He travelled to Russia in 1921 whilst still editor of *The Daily Herald*. Once in Russia he met many of the Bolshevik leaders including Lenin. He recorded the way in which Lenin's lack of ostentation and his honest manner struck him.^[135] He also saw no evidence of repression against Christians. Indeed, he recorded his satisfaction at the apparent 'perfect freedom to worship God' afforded to Christians. In contrast to the situation in Britain, he saw real evidence that the Russian view of women, in the workplace at least, was far advanced on that of his homeland. He was not unaware of the problems present in the coercive atmosphere of revolutionary society, but that said, he regarded it as his duty to attempt to redress the balance of British public opinion through the medium of his newspaper. Thus he wrote on his return: 'In my judgement, no set of men and women responsible for a revolution of the magnitude of the Russian Revolution ever made fewer mistakes or carried their revolution through with less interference with the rights of the individuals, or with less terrorism and destruction.'^[136]

What is of particular significance in these comments of Lansbury is that they appear to Leventhal to be so full of hyperbole that he argues that Lansbury was: 'Too willing to accept intention for result, he seemed oblivious to the capacity for ruthlessness or guile among men who, "actuated by purely moral and religious motives", were "striving to build the New Jerusalem".'^[137] Lansbury was exceedingly popular with 'the average Baptist.' Yet the question must be asked why Baptists did not have a more sympathetic view of the situation in Russia. Granted that the persecutions of religious believers may have started later in the decade, but for the strength of feeling expressed in the pages of the *Baptist Times* to be generated, it can only be concluded that the main national and religious newspapers had a major role to play in this presentation of a critical view of the Russian leadership's intolerance of religious freedom. It might be argued that the news reports of good progress in Russia which did emerge from time to time were not strong enough in themselves to redress the balance of popular imagery of Russia as a cruel and dangerous rival to the Western power brokers. That the *Baptist Times* correspondents and writers presented only the negative side of the picture, and particularly that they showed only the religious persecution dimension, is an indication of a lack of breadth and depth in the denomination's view of world affairs. Having said all this, the writings of such men as Henry Townsend, the Baptist historian and principal of the Manchester Baptist College, must be taken into account. In the early 1930s he wrote *Religion, Revelation and Democracy*.^[138] In this work Townsend reviewed sympathetically Marxist thinking as worked out in contemporary Russia.

Baptists in the early 1930s were also beginning to debate and discuss

the issue of Indian independence. Gandhi was fairly well received, though with some caution.[139] Although the *Baptist Times* appeared torn in its position between the Baptist tradition of liberty of conscience and peoples, and its allegiance to the concept of Empire, its general position tended towards the granting to India of some form of Dominion status.[140] This entrance of Baptists into the ongoing debate about the nature of future political change for India came rather late in the day. The subject was immensely complex and fraught with party-political ramifications. It was really only with the more strident line adopted by Gandhi and his fellow campaigners in the late Twenties and early Thirties that Christians - as with their political masters - were forced to consider the matter with much greater care.

This analysis of issues perceived as important by the Baptist leadership during 1930 itself is of interest not just for what it says, but also for what it leaves unsaid. The following broad conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, Baptists had already moved to a fairly cautious stance both politically and socially. During 1930 they took issue with the government on a number of issues, but lacked any strong political campaigning zeal. On some issues (notably India) they appear to have acceded to a mild imperialism. The extent of their interest in developments in Russia was both parochial and inclined to be simplistic, preferring the apparent certainties under the later Czars to the unknown future under Communism. Faced with these profound changes in their world-view so far as it pertained to Russia, their concerns tended to become limited solely to their co-religionists.

Secondly, there was already no political consensus in the Baptist Union by the year 1930. There existed an air of disillusionment with all

political parties. The Baptist Union leadership presented a specifically negative view of the Labour Party, and a romanticised picture of Lloyd George as representative of the older Liberal tradition. That said, the *Baptist Times* was itself becoming increasingly critical of Lloyd George. It is clear that Baptists were, by this stage of their history, disillusioned by the ineffectiveness and loss of direction of the Liberal Party as such. Some exhibited a nostalgia for the great days of Liberalism, but it may be argued that the Baptists provide a case study of the more general loss of political direction suffered by Liberalism. A move towards a more monetarist understanding of economics is discernible. Tensions were becoming apparent between those who held either reactionary or radical views on how to solve the economic and social crises of the day. Overall, the best advice the *Baptist Times* could give was for everyone to 'tighten their belts.' In summary, the Baptist leadership felt unable to give any party-political leadership to its people, although the personal views of such as Carlile and Aubrey inevitably surfaced from time to time.

Thirdly, Baptists lacked an active social involvement with "ordinary" people. They appeared ready to debate major issues, but little evidence is forthcoming in the pages of the *Baptist Times* and official Baptist Union documents of an engagement with the very real social problems already afflicting Britain. This may not have been due to heartlessness. Rather, it may be seen as a reflection of confusion and uncertainty of their changed role in society. What is clear is that the denominational opinion-formers saw no easy answers to these complex changes, and were adamant that no one political party had those answers either.

Fourthly, there were social issues about which Baptists did find a voice. These were the 'traditional issues' such as temperance and

education rather than the newer, and in retrospect, far more significant, issues of social upheaval and change.

Finally, arresting the decline in numbers of the Baptist churches was fast becoming an almost obsessive pre-occupation. The numerical decline of the denomination continued to be the over-riding concern for its leadership. Some rationalisation of the causes is apparent. The two clearest points for debate, however, were the nature of the impact of the Great War on the Baptist constituency, and the suggestion that many who had previously regarded themselves as Baptists were actually insincere.

In these five areas the leadership of the Baptist Union appears to have continued the trends previously noted whereby the 'old' Liberal Party allegiance declined and issues of 'personal' conversion and morality came to predominate. The role of the leadership of the Baptist Union had become largely one of trying to keep together, and in good heart, a denomination that had already lost its formerly distinctive identity and perhaps even its very *raison d'être*.

Footnotes to Chapter 2:

1. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/30 p 19. NB: A comparison with the figures in Appendix 1 is helpful in this discussion of numerical decline.
2. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/30 p 33.
3. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/30 pp 33ff.
4. *Baptist Times*, 23/1/30 pp 55, 56.
5. *Baptist Times*, 1/5/30 p 302.
6. *Baptist Times*, 23/1/30 p 61.
7. *Baptist Times*, 30/1/30 p 71.
8. *Baptist Times*, 30/1/30 p 71.
9. See, H Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black* (London, 1953), pp 103 to 117. cf M West, 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey: Part 3,' pp 320ff.
10. *Baptist Times*, 30/1/30 p 73; 6/2/30 p 90; 20/3/30 p 189; 27/3/30 p 218; 3/4/30 p 225.
11. Henry Townsend, 'Revelation and Democracy,' in *Baptist Union Presidential and Other Addresses: 1931-1933*, p 88. Also published as *Religion, Revelation and Democracy* (London, nd).
12. *Records of the Baptist Union Presidential and Other Addresses, 1927-31* (London 1931).
13. *Baptist Union Annual Report: 1930-35* (London, 1935), 1930, p 11. See also: *ibid*, 1930, pp 7 to 9.
14. *Croydon Advertiser*, 13/6/31 p 7.

15. *Report of the Council of the Baptist Union: 1931.*
16. L G Champion, 'Baptist Life in the Twentieth Century - Some Personal Reflections,' in *Baptists and the Twentieth Century*, ed Keith W Clements.
17. *Fillebrook's 100 Years* (Fillebrook Baptist Church, Leytonstone, nd, Private Publication).
18. R Bolton, *175 Years of History: Ilford High Road Baptist Church*, (Private Publication, 1975), p 12.
19. *Fifty Years of Witness: Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church, 1910-1960* (Private Publication, 1960), p 13.
20. See, for example: Robbins, 'Free Churchmen and the Twenty Years Crisis,' p 351; *Baptist Times*, 5/6/30 p 403.
21. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/30 p 36.
22. *Baptist Times*, 20/2/30 p 125.
23. *Baptist Times*, 13/3/30 p 177. cf Cox, *English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 256.
24. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/30 p 9.
25. *Baptist Times*, 6/2/30 p 91.
26. *Baptist Times*, 6/2/30 p 91.
27. *Baptist Times*, 17/4/30 p 270; 12/6/30 p 421.
28. *Baptist Times*, 8/5/30 p 325.
29. *Baptist Times*, 8/5/30 p 325.
30. *Baptist Times*, 4/9/30 p 627.
31. *Baptist Times*, 6/11/30 p 779. On the issue of Lloyd George and electoral reform, see: J Grigg, 'Lloyd George and Electoral Reform,' in *The Political Culture of Modern Britain*, ed J M W Bean (London, 1987), pp 165 to 177.
32. *Baptist Times*, 11/12/30 p 891.
33. *Baptist Times*, 23/1/30 p 59.
34. *Baptist Times*, 23/1/30 p 54.
35. See for example, *Baptist Times*, 30/1/30 p 75; 6/2/30 p 91; 7/8/30 p 563.
36. *Baptist Times*, 3/4/30 p 231.
37. *Baptist Times*, 27/2/30 p 143; 7/8/30 p 563; 14/8/30 p 579; 28/8/30 p 611. cf Miller and Raab, 'The Religious Alignment at English Elections between 1918 and 1970,' p 228.
38. *Baptist Times*, 13/2/30 p 107.
39. *Baptist Times*, 23/10/30 p 739.
40. *Baptist Times*, 6/11/30 p 779.
41. *Baptist Times*, 25/12/30 p 979; see also *Baptist World Alliance Congress: 1934*, pp 57 to 62.
42. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/30 p 45.
43. See *Baptist Times*, 10/4/30 p 250; 15/5/30 p 347; 5/6/30 p 407; 25/9/30 p 675; 23/10/30 p 745, for examples.
44. *Baptist Times*, 13/2/30 p 111.
45. *Baptist Times*, 3/4/30 pp 227, 231.
46. *Baptist Times*, 29/5/30 p 389.
47. *Baptist Times*, 22/5/30 p 371.
48. *Baptist Times*, 30/10/30 p 759.
49. *Baptist Times*, 11/9/30 p 643.
50. *Annual Report: 1930*, pp 7, 11, 24f. See also: the report of the *Baptist World Alliance Congress: 1934*, pp 108f.
51. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/30 p 12.
52. *Fifty Years of Witness: Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church, 1910-1960* (Private Publication, 1960).
53. *Our Centenary Story* (Private Publication, 1942).
54. *Pioneering in London, E 4: 1935-6-7-8*, (Private Publication, nd).

55. *Three Hundred Years' Witness for Christ: 1638-1938*, (Private Publication, nd).
56. H Wickenden, *The Church in the Fields, 1855-1955: A Short History of Park Baptist Church, Brentford* (Private Publication, nd).
57. *Souvenir of the Centenary of Camden Road Baptist Church: 1854-1954* (Private Publication, nd).
58. H G Callingham, *Love so amazing, 1672-1972: A brief history of Battersea Chapel* (Private Publication, nd).
59. *Alperton Baptist Church Tercentenary Jubilee Booklet: 1824-1974* (Private Publication, 1974).
60. *Penge Baptist Church: 1865-1965* (Private Publication, nd).
61. B W Amey, *Jesus is Lord: An Account of New Malden Baptist Church, 1860-1953* (Private Publication, nd).
62. *Bunyan Baptist Church, Kingston-on-Thames: 1882-1957* (Private Publication, nd).
63. *Fifty Years Forward: Being the Jubilee Brochure of the Baptist Church, Goodmayes* (Private Publication, 1964).
64. M H Perry, *A Colony of Heaven: The Story of Highams Park Baptist Church from 1913-1988* (Private Publication, 1988).
65. *The Opening and Dedication of the New Church Hall, 25 September 1965* (Private Publication, nd).
66. *Leaves from Memory Lane: Jubilee Programme and Record, 1937* (Private Publication, 1937).
67. *Balham Baptist Church: 1874-1974* (Private Publication, nd).
68. *A Century of Christian Witness: Barking Baptist Tabernacle, 1850-1950* (Private Publication, nd).
69. *Carshalton Beeches Baptist Free Church: 1931 to 1952* (Private Publication, nd).
70. *Catford Hill Baptist Church: 75th Anniversary Souvenir* (Private Publication, 1953).
71. *The Church on the Hill* (Private Publication, nd).
72. *Dawes Road Baptist Church, Fulham: Jubilee, 1885-1935* (Private Publication, nd).
73. R A Cowley, *They Built in Faith* (Private Publication, nd).
74. J Willmott, *Sunshine and Shadows: A Century of Witness in Hounslow, Middlesex* (London, 1949).
75. *Ferne Park Retrospect* (Private Publication, c 1964).
76. *Fillebrook's 100 Years* (Private Publication, nd).
77. *A Hundred Years: 1835-1935* (Private Publication, nd).
78. *21 Years of Progress: The Story of Rayners Lane Free Church, Baptist: 1934-1955* (Private Publication, nd).
79. H G Callaghan, *Love so amazing: 1672-1972, A brief history of Battersea Chapel* (Private Publication, nd).
80. *The First 100 years: Lordship Lane Baptist Church, Dulwich, 1870-1970* (Private Publication, nd), pp 22f.
81. *East London Tabernacle - A Brief History* (Private Publication, 1956).
82. R Bolton, *175 Years of History: Ilford High Road Baptist Church* (Private Publication, 1975).
83. *'Bloomsbury:' What it stands for* (Private Publication, 1912).
84. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/30 p 16; 9/1/30 pp 22, 30; 16/1/30 p 46; 23/1/30 p 68.
85. *Baptist Times*, 13/2/30 p 105.
86. See for example: *Baptist Times*, 9/1/30 p 21; 16/1/30 p 49; 15/5/30 p 358; 26/6/30 p 465; 26/6/30 p 468; 3/7/30 p 488.
87. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 86.
88. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/30 p 4.
89. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/30 p 39.

90. *Baptist Times*, 6/2/30 p 90.
91. *Baptist Times*, 27/3/30 p 215.
92. *Baptist Union Annual Report: 1930*, p 24.
93. *Baptist Times*, 3/4/30 p 234.
94. *Baptist Times*, 15/5/30 p 347.
95. *Baptist Times*, 15/5/30 pp 349f.
96. *Baptist Times*, 5/6/30 p 407.
97. *Baptist Times*, 19/6/30 p 427.
98. *Baptist Times*, 10/7/30 p 495.
99. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/30 p 16.
100. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/30 p 16.
101. *Baptist Times*, 30/1/30 p 75. See also: *Baptist Times* 13/2/30 p 105; 27/2/30 p 138; 6/3/30 p 154; 13/3/30 p 176; 20/3/30 pp 190, 202; 1/5/30 p 304; 8/5/30 p 328; 15/5/30 pp 343f; E A Payne, *The Baptists of Berkshire* (London, 1951), p 126.
102. *Baptist Times*, 5/6/30 p 403.
103. *Annual Report: 1930*, p 13; see also: *Baptist Union Assembly Programme: 1930*, pp 23ff.
104. *Annual Report: 1930*, p 36.
105. *Baptist Times*, 5/6/30 p 403.
106. *Baptist Times*, 3/7/30 p 472.
107. See, for example: *Baptist Times*, 9/1/30 p 17; 23/1/30 p 59; 30/1/30 pp 75, 77; 6/2/30 p 90; 13/2/30 p 107; 20/2/30 p 127; 27/2/30 p 143; 20/3/30 p 195; 10/4/30 pp 246, 250.
108. *Baptist Times*, 23/1/30 p 57.
109. *Baptist Times*, 29/5/30 p 391; 5/6/30 p 407; 10/7/30 p 496; 17/7/30 p 515.
110. *Baptist Times*, 10/7/30 p 497.
111. *Croydon Advertiser*, 20/9/30 p 2.
112. Personal communication with the Rev A Betteridge, former secretary of the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship.
113. Personal communication with the Rev Dr H H Williams, one-time minister of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church.
114. W T Whitley, 'Four Centuries of Pacifism' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1930/31, V, pp 97 to 100.
115. Wallace Vellam Pitts, *Reflections of 90 years*, p 18. See also: Clyde Binfield, *Pastors and People* (Coventry, 1984), pp 202 to 264, especially pp 244 to 264.
116. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/30 p 21.
117. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/30 p 23.
118. See: *Baptist Times*, 9/1/30 p 25, for example.
119. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/30 p 25.
120. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/30 p 48; 27/2/30 pp 143, 147.
121. *Baptist Times*, 13/3/30 p 179.
122. *Baptist Times*, 6/3/30 pp 153, 154, 157.
123. *Baptist Times*, 26/6/30 p 459.
124. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 84. For a discussion of Baptist interest in the Christians of Czechoslovakia and Germany respectively, see: Josef Novotny, 'Czecho-Slovaks,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1924/25, II, pp 296ff; and Ernest Payne's translation and abridgement of H Petrick's 'The Tasks of the Baptist Denomination in Germany,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1928/29, IV, pp 160ff.
125. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/30 p 43; 3/4/30 p 229; 10/4/30 pp 253ff; 3/7/30 pp 479f.
126. *Baptist Times*, 3/4/30 p 244; 10/4/30 pp 249f; 24/4/30 p 293; 19/6/30 p 437; 10/7/30 p 495; 17/7/30 p 511.
127. *Baptist Times*, 3/7/30 p 480.

128. Geoffrey Shakespeare, 'The Persecution of Baptists in Russia,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1930, V, pp 49ff. See also: E A Payne, 'Christ in Russia,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1928/29, IV, pp 235ff (This was a review of the German book, *Gott Erleben in Ssowet-Russland*, published in 1927.); E A Payne, 'Baptists on the Continent: A Plea for more Interest and Concern,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1930/31, V, pp 11ff. For more recent reflections on this topic see: D B Funderbunk, 'Baptists in Russia since World War One,' *Baptist Quarterly*, July 1971, XXIV, pp 135ff; Denton Lotz, 'The Baptist Witness in Eastern Europe,' *Baptist Quarterly*, April 1971, XXVIII, pp 68ff.
129. *Annual Report: 1930*, p 22.
130. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 84.
131. *Baptist World Alliance Congress: 1934*, pp 154, 222.
132. *Baptist World Alliance Congress: 1939*, pp 214, 217.
133. Quoted in D Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977), p 208.
134. F M Leventhal, 'Seeing the Future: British Left-Wing Travellers to the Soviet Union, 1919-32,' in *The Political Culture of Modern Britain*, pp 209 to 227.
135. Leventhal, 'Seeing the Future: British Left-Wing Travellers to the Soviet Union,' p 212.
136. Quoted in *ibid*, p 213. Taken from, George Lansbury, *What I Saw in Russia* (London, 1920), p 24.
137. Leventhal, 'Seeing the Future: British Left-Wing Travellers to the Soviet Union,' p 213.
138. H Townsend, *Religion, Revelation and Democracy*, p 88.
139. *Baptist Times*, 30/1/30 p 73; 13/3/30 p 179; 27/3/30 p 211. See also: J D Hunt, *Gandhi and the Nonconformists: Encounters in South Africa* (New Delhi, 1986).
140. *Baptist Times*, 3/4/30 p 231; 17/4/30 p 268; 8/5/30 pp 322,327; 22/5/30 p 371; 13/6/30 p 423; 19/6/30 p 439; 26/6/30 p 459; 3/7/30 p 475; 10/7/30 p 495; 17/7/30 p 515; 24/7/30 p 531.

CHAPTER 3

Major Themes: 1931 to 1939

Numerical decline in the Baptist denomination

The problem of decline, it has just been noted, increasingly became an over-riding, even obsessional, concern within the Baptist denomination. During 1931, little comment was made by the Baptist denominational journal on the vexed question of numerical decline. However, it was joyfully reported that during 1932 the numerical strength of the Baptist Union increased overall by 288 compared with 1931.^[1] Very helpfully, however, the Council of the Union made some pertinent comments about the geographical nature of these numerical changes. It pointed out that five counties had made significant gains, Essex (317), Sussex (237), Warwickshire (241), Somerset (174), and Surrey (92). Conversely, two counties had suffered sharp declines, Yorkshire (-248) and Lancashire (-321). In response to this analysis it was suggested that discussion should be promoted at Union and Association levels on the 'effects of industrial depression on religious work.'^[2] When considering this analysis it is important to keep in mind Aubrey's often repeated view of the best response to declining numbers in the denomination. This was probably most clearly put in his presidential address to the Baptist Union Assembly in 1950, where he stated firmly: 'Organisation is important but cannot create life...Let us be warned. Our trust must be less in schemes and committees than in prayer, dedication, obedience and self-sacrifice.'

As noted earlier, in response to the decline in membership of the churches the Baptist Union launched the Discipleship Campaign in 1932. The

Presidential Address that year had been given by the distinguished lawyer and leading Baptist lay preacher Alfred Ellis, JP, under the title of 'Our Discipleship Campaign.'^[3] However, in 1933, the Union actually suffered another net loss in its membership. The *Annual Report* for 1932 finally had to concede that the numbers battle required more positive initiatives. It noted that:

'We are unable to report numerical progress and in this we confess disappointment...The complaint that people are moving away from the Churches must inevitably raise the retort: "Then why are not the Churches moving with the people?" We have pleaded before, and we do so again, that Churches in districts where they can no longer secure congregations should seriously consider whether it is their duty to move to other districts where a better response can be secured.'^[4]

The leadership of the Baptist Union gave constant attention to means by which the decline in numbers might be stemmed. As 1935 commenced and it became clear that 1934 was to be remembered as yet another year of numerical decline Aubrey urged that the continuance of the Campaign was essential.^[5] The 1934 *Annual Report* presented a three-page analysis of the situation in an attempt to clarify the reasons for the continued drop in membership figures and to consider responses,^[6] and the *Annual Report* considered the Campaign to be going well.^[7] The Union had, in fact appointed an Evangelism Commissioner, the Rev J N Britton,^[8] to push forward this work. Britton had previously been minister for 13 years of Avenue Baptist Church, Southend. The *Baptist Times* described him as 'Scot of the Scots without a Scottish accent.'^[9] The finance for the post had been donated by an 'anonymous friend' - probably Wilson Black.^[10] Aubrey

gave constant support to the Discipleship Campaign through his visits to the provinces.[11] From this point on the Discipleship Campaign came under the aegis of the new Forward Movement led by Britton, and under the chairmanship of Robert Wilson Black. It was seen as: 'a new effort to bring our Churches into harmony with God's purpose for them, to kindle fires of devotion in the hearts of our people...[to] constrain us all to do more for the evangelising of mankind everywhere, both in our own land and beyond the seas.'[12]

Also, about this time, a contemporary and widely read author, David Williamson, in his *Religion in the King's Reign*, had made a considerable impact on the denomination with the publication of his comparison of church statistics for 1910 and 1934. During that period the population of England and Wales had risen by 4.397 million - despite the ravages of the Great War. The Church of England had increased the numbers of communicants by nearly 300,000, but had lost nearly 700,000 Sunday school scholars. The Methodist Church had decreased in membership by 57,363, and had lost nearly 700,000 Sunday school scholars. The Congregational Union had lost 149,600 members and 297,939 scholars. The Baptist Union in 1910 had returned a membership of 394,262 and in 1934 had dropped to 375,383, a decrease of 18,879. It had also lost 123,220 scholars.[13]

The *Baptist Times* reviewer of Williamson's book had something to say to nearly everyone in Baptist church life. 'Preachers should commit these lurid figures to memory.' They had lost touch with the modern mind. 'Our congregations are too middle-aged.' The pulpit had become boring. Cinema was perceived as being far more attractive than the pulpit. 'The Radio makes it easy for half-interested people to listen-in at home rather than turn out to a public service.' He then posed the question: 'Are we still to go on in the same old way that our grandfathers trod until we come to

the end of the journey, perhaps to the end of our existence as organised forms of religion?' Whilst Sunday school methods had been updated - 'revolutionised' - the Churches had lagged behind. He then wondered whether 'the surprise power of the pulpit [could] be re-discovered? Is it really necessary to follow the stereotyped order of public worship that has become so familiar that Church attendants could go over it in their sleep?'

The statistics for 1935 were again depressing. An anonymous writer in the *Baptist Times* commented on 16 June 1936 that the declining number of Sunday school teachers and scholars was a cause for deepest concern. Significantly, however, genuine attempts were by now being made to study and understand the underlying causes of the decline. This writer, for example, suggested that there might be social class reasons which resulted in the most severe decline being in 'great industrial areas.'^[14]

J C Carlile's own analysis came in a *Baptist Times* leader on 23 January 1936, entitled, 'Fear of the Figures.' In his typically robust manner he pointed out that the decline was not unique to Baptists. Both the *Church Times* and the *British Weekly* had recently been discussing 'leakage' from respectively, Anglicanism and Nonconformity generally. Carlile's contention was that the Great War had been the crucial factor: 'Those who would have been our strength and support did not come back from the Front. Much of the flower of our manhood never bloomed in the Church but was buried in the fields where Flanders poppies grow.'^[15] He further argued that war had unsettled the youth of the Twenties and Thirties. The Church, too, must bear responsibility for not seeking an understanding of contemporary issues. Instead, it must live in 'the real world.' He concluded: 'We offer no opiate, no drug that will induce further sleep. There is a call to action. Each man must use his own weapon in the fight,

play his own part, and give his own answer to his conscience and his God.'[16] Others who also reflected on this issue included the Rev G M Wylie of Bradford[17] and Councillor S Taylor, President of the N E District of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association, who concluded that: 'We are in a parlous state.'[18]

The *Annual Report* for 1936 also discussed in detail the issue of decline in Sunday school attendance. It was noted that some 19,000 Sunday school scholars had been lost in 1935. The drop in numbers over the past 12 years was 100,000.[19] The reasons were seen to be several, but included the falling birthrate, Sunday games and non-church-based religious activities for the young, and inefficient Sunday schools.[20] A Sunday school adviser - Miss Phyllis Morgan - had been appointed by the Baptist Union in 1935, and it was to be hoped that her services would be well-used.[21] The *Report* concluded: 'Until our Church members, as well as our Ministers, really grapple with this problem and make serious efforts to learn what those around them are thinking and find ways to their minds and consciences, the prospects for the Church are not bright.'[22]

Part of the perceived answer for the Baptist Union lay in the launching of 'The Call to Advance.' This was announced in a *Baptist Times* leader on 19 March 1936.[23] Later in that edition M E Aubrey explained that the Baptist Union Council had resolved to raise £1m over the next decade for the purpose of church extension.[24] In April of that year the Council plans were presented to and accepted by the annual Assembly.[25] Acceptance of the principle behind the Forward Movement, as it was to be known, was both rapid and whole-hearted.[26] By the end of April £267,700 had already been subscribed.[27] The formal launch of the Movement took place at a Royal Albert Hall rally at the beginning of May. The Movement was seen as rooted in the vision of M E Aubrey's predecessor as General

Secretary of the Baptist Union, J H Shakespeare.[28] The Forward Movement was to feature regularly in the *Baptist Times* throughout 1936.[29] The Movement was then re-emphasised in an extended leader on 26 November.[30] Aubrey also opened 1937 with a plea for personal revival as a step to national revival.[31] This wider revival was often linked to the potential of the Forward Movement.[32] In February 1937 Aubrey, as Moderator of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England, also signed a statement in support of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Recall to Religion.[33]

Not to be outdone, the Rev F W Jolly, MBE, President of the Spurgeon's College Conference for 1937 and long-time missionary to India, took as his theme, 'The Church's Unfinished Task.' In this he argued that: 'The great need in the face of the terrible drift from religion all over the world, is that the Christian life should be lived. It must be seen in our commerce and in all social, national and international relationships - not merely talked about and preached.'[34]

In this climate of seeking ways out of the numerical decline in the denomination it should come as no surprise to discover that the *Baptist Times* was generally sympathetic to the Oxford Group Movement. Although perceived to be High Church in ethos, it was also renowned for its theological conservatism - a clear point of appeal for many Baptists.[35] Enthusiasm for the Oxford Group was by no means unequivocal, however. Numerous news items led up to a leader on 3 September 1936 addressing itself to the Oxford Group sharing principle. The writer - presumably J C Carlile - was unconvinced of the efficacy of this element of the Movement.[36] Yet Carlile had actually given patronage to the Movement a year earlier.[37]

The membership statistics for 1936 were no better than previous years.

Aubrey expressed confusion at the lack of any clear pattern in the figures. He began: 'As in previous years, I have been analysing [the Membership Statistics] rather closely, especially those dealing with Associations in England and the English Associations in South Wales. Once again it is very difficult to reach any general conclusions.' After discussing various regional findings he concluded:

'Will some statistical genius tell us what these figures mean? Depression might be an excuse in the North, but it does not seem seriously to affect membership in South Wales, and prosperity has not helped in the big cities. I find it difficult, even impossible, to draw any conclusion except the general one that we all should pray, think and work with our whole might for a new revelation of the glory of God in Christ Jesus.'^[38]

On 22 July 1937 J C Carlile produced what had by now become an annual leader on the subject.^[39] He could offer no easy answers. As another of the several attempts at analysis of the problem in 1937 Arthur Porritt, editor of *The Christian World* and regular columnist for the *Baptist Times*, shared 20-year statistics indicating that the numerical decline was common to all denominations. Porritt concluded that the over-riding moral to be drawn from these statistics was that the Sunday school system was facing 'swift and cumulative collapse.' He further raised the question whether, 'for the child of today, a wholly different technique has not to be worked out by the Churches.'^[40] Herbert Henry Elvin, General Secretary of the National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers, and Chairman of the General Council of the TUC, was much more scathing in his appraisal. Under the title, 'My Church and the Labour Movement,' he concluded: 'For years

there has been an estrangement between "The Church" and the working classes.'^[41] Still another position was postulated by David Williamson, editor of the *Daily Mail Year Book*. His analysis, under the title, 'Church Statistics from a Layman's Point of View,' argued that Sunday cinemas and other pleasure facilities were not the cause of the decline in the churches. He identified three causes. Firstly, there was people's experience rising out of the Great War. Secondly, there was a strong feeling that the churches had not grasped the deep undercurrent caused by the problems of modern life. Thirdly, the churches had become more formal, and lacked any passion for souls. If Williamson offered three criticisms he also suggested five positive changes. Firstly, there should be more elasticity in the manner of services. Secondly, there should be more 'special services.' Thirdly, times of services should be more flexible. What about 10 am services at seashores, and 8 pm evening services? Fourthly, churches should use good notice-boards and newspaper reporting to commend themselves to others. Fifthly, preachers should challenge themselves after they have preached. Were they speaking beyond their experience?^[42]

The membership figures of the Baptist Union declined again in 1937.^[43] Thus, almost inevitably, Aubrey addressed the question in his first *Baptist Times* notes for the year 1938. Membership had declined by 1,524 persons. The Sunday school decline was staggering, a loss of 16,577 children. His answer remained the same as ever: '...we must preach a more adventurous Christianity, as well as more definite faith than has been the general custom in the Christian Church for some time past.' Arthur Porritt followed this a week later: 'The only consolatory thought is that people who go to church nowadays go not to conform to convention, but because they need and want what the churches can give them.'^[44]

Aubrey next applied some simple statistics in his attempt to understand the real nature of the problem. There were still approximately 400,000 scholars in Baptist Sunday schools. Their average length of attendance appeared to be 7 years. Therefore, he deduced, 60,000 join and leave each year. Baptisms, however, remained at less than 10,000 per annum. Therefore, only one sixth of scholars passed on to baptism.[45] The denomination was facing a failure to convert those in its numbers. Once again widening the debate to other denominations Arthur Porritt noted the loss of 49,375 Sunday school scholars from Methodist churches during 1937. Membership also fell by 3,564. One factor in the equation, he argued, was the widespread movement from rural to urban areas taking place as a result of the slump. Urban areas - particularly when redeveloped into flats - had poor Sunday school provision. This was a factor which gave impetus to the various City Missions around this time.[46]

The *Daily Mail Year Book* published in November 1938 brought its usual sad tale. During 1937 Protestant churches had lost 20,000 members and 94,000 Sunday school scholars. The picture for Baptists appeared to be reflected elsewhere.[47] Not surprisingly, concern about numerical decline within the Baptist denomination was eclipsed by world events as the decade drew to a close. Few comments appear in the pages of the *Baptist Times* during these last two years.

Decline in numbers was thus a constant concern to Baptists during the 1930s, and many possible reasons for the decline were discussed during the period: the young were not being reached, the cinema was proving too attractive, radio services tempted people to obtain their religion in their own lounge, Sunday schools were thought out of date, much Baptist preaching was weak and boring, the Discipleship Campaign had not been

fully taken up by the churches, social divisions existed between the churches and the masses, the Great War had done severe damage to the churches.

With the benefit of 50 years of hindsight it is possible to suggest that two of these factors were key elements in this decline. The first was the deepening crisis within the Sunday school system from the mid-Twenties onwards. P B Cliff has demonstrated the severity of this decline. Amongst Baptists numbers fell by 29.7% between 1901 and 1939, a third of that decline occurring between 1914 and 1919.^[48] Cliff has also argued that a number of negative factors were at work within the Sunday school system. The continued movement of population towards larger urban areas was clearly a problem for many provincial Sunday schools. Equally, it must be noted that only a small percentage of the children from provincial Baptist Sunday schools actually settled into urban churches.^[49] He has further demonstrated the urge for Sunday schools to develop their own para-church identity. This resulted in pressure being exerted to have their own premises - hence the increase in average number of church buildings per church fellowship in the mid- to late-Twenties manifest in Appendix 1 (Chart 2 and Table 5) of this thesis. He also describes the decline of morning attendance by teachers and scholars (as low as 10% by 1939).^[50] The tension between 'church' and 'Sunday school' is attested by the ongoing challenge to grading systems that arose from time to time at Baptist Union Assemblies. Much energy was thus expended on Sunday schools for very little tangible return. Although longstanding, this crisis within the Sunday schools came into focus in the 1930s at a time when those 1920s scholars should have been coming into full church membership.

Secondly, and closely linked to the first point, Baptist churches fell foul of their own social aspirations. As they became more and more

respectable they unwittingly increasingly distanced themselves in ethos, worship and outlook from the working classes. As Chapter 1 of this thesis argues, this was no new phenomenon. Indeed, it can be demonstrated to have been a continuing process from the late 1870s onwards. What is significant is that by the mid-Thirties the public perception of Baptists - and other Nonconformists - was that they were decidedly middle-class.

The response of the Baptist leadership, in launching the Forward Movement and the Discipleship Campaign, simply served to compound the problem of numerical decline because it failed adequately to challenge the churches to see the root cause of the problem in their own attitudes and structures. The dalliance of some Baptist churches with the Oxford Group Movement with its strongly middle- to upper-middle class ethos would have had the same effect.^[51] The result was continued confusion and an increasingly defeatist attitude and wistful longing for the old days. A subtle political parallel can be observed here in Baldwin's constant harping back to 'the real England'. A certain nostalgic romanticism had arguably crept in to both Baptist religion and national politics.

Finally, it must be asked whether Baptist concern and confusion over denominational decline and its causes also distracted them from social and political engagement with all the grass roots contact that it affords with various strata within society, or whether, in fact, their weakening political and social voice was itself a factor in their numerical decline. The balance of argument in this thesis rests with the former. By the nineteen thirties the denomination was facing a clear identity crisis. The halcyon days were now past, and, whether or not the average church member was aware of the changed religious climate, the leadership of the denomination could see that change most clearly. In turn, their concern lay more with finding a new identity for the denomination and thus,

hopefully, moving back to a policy of growth - or even simply holding current numbers - than in seeking to regain major political influence. This point will be discussed more fully in the next two chapters.

Footnotes to Chapter 3:

1. *Annual Report: 1932*, p 8.
2. M E Aubrey, *Baptist Advance* (London, nd).
3. *Baptist Union Presidential and Other Addresses, 1932-36*, 1932, p 5, delivered on 25/4/32. The aims and methods of both the Discipleship Campaign and the Forward Movement are detailed in the *Annual Report: 1935*, pp 7ff and 50ff, and *Annual Report: 1936*, p 12.
4. *Annual Report: 1933*, pp 7f.
5. *Annual Report: 1934*, pp 10ff.
6. *Baptist Times*, 10/1/35 p 27.
7. *Annual Report: 1935*, pp 7f.
8. See, for example: *ibid*, p 10.
9. *Baptist Times*, 28/11/35 p 875.
10. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 9.
11. See, for example: *Baptist Times*, 16/1/36 p 54.
12. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 11.
13. Cited and discussed in *Baptist Times*, 1/10/35 p 716.
14. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/36 p 43.
15. *Baptist Times*, 23/1/36 p 61.
16. *Baptist Times*, 23/1/36 p 62.
17. *Baptist Times*, 27/2/36 p 161.
18. *Baptist Times*, 5/3/36 p 174.
19. *Annual Report: 1936*, pp 14f.
20. *ibid*, p 15.
21. *ibid*, p 16.
22. *ibid*, pp 18ff.
23. *Baptist Times*, 19/3/36 pp 209f.
24. *Baptist Times*, 19/3/36 pp 211.
25. *Baptist Times*, 9/4/36 p 271. See also: *Annual Report: 1936*, pp 9ff.
26. See, for example: *Baptist Times*, 16/4/35 pp 293ff; 30/4/36 p 332.
27. *Baptist Times*, 30/4/36 p 327.
28. *Baptist Times*, 7/5/36 pp 355ff.
29. A typical brief report is that of *Baptist Times*, 21/5/36 p 391.
30. *Baptist Times*, 26/11/36 p 897.
31. *Baptist Times*, 7/1/37 pp 2f.
32. *Baptist Times*, 18/2/37 p 122.
33. *Baptist Times*, 25/2/37 p 143.
34. *Baptist Times*, 8/4/37 p 270. See also: *Annual Report: 1938*, pp 20f.
35. cf Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp 289ff; Bebbington, 'The Oxford Group Movement between the Wars,' in *Voluntary Religion*, pp 495ff.
36. *Baptist Times*, 3/9/36 pp 668 and 670.
37. cf Bebbington, 'The Oxford Group,' p 499; *The Times*, 9/7/35, p 11.
38. *Baptist Times*, 4/2/37 p 83.
39. *Baptist Times*, 22/7/37 pp 549f.
40. *Baptist Times*, 25/11/37 p 891.
41. *Baptist Times*, 2/12/37 p 917.
42. *Baptist Times*, 9/12/37 p 957.

43. *Baptist Times*, 6/1/38 p 3.
44. *Baptist Times*, 13/1/38 p 27.
45. *Baptist Times*, 17/2/38 pp 122f.
46. *Baptist Times*, 21/7/38 p 567.
47. *Baptist Times*, 1/12/38 p 903. See also: *Annual Report: 1938*, pp 10f.
48. Cliff, *Sunday School Movement*, p 231.
49. *ibid*, p 221.
50. *ibid*, pp 220ff.
51. cf Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp 288f; Bebbington, 'The Oxford Group,' pp 504f.

CHAPTER 4

Major Themes: 1931 to 1939

National Politics

Baptist apprehension of the political situation pertaining in Britain remained confused as 1931 opened. Lloyd George was still the hero of many "ordinary" Baptists,^[1] but was called to account on a number of occasions by writers in the *Baptist Times*. As early as 2 April 1931 a feature predicted that the Liberal (or rather, Lloyd George) insistence on re-employment through government financing would speed the inevitable collapse of the finely balanced working relationship between the Labour and Liberal parliamentary parties. The tension within the Liberal Party was clearly understood to precede that between the Liberal and Labour parties. The 23 April 1931 edition, for example, carried a report highlighting Lord Grey's disquiet at the uncertainty in Liberal circles as to the stance which should be adopted over Labour plans for reflation. The predicted collapse of the government came, of course, when in August the Labour government resigned.^[2]

The reasons for this inevitable collapse of the government are many and complex. Attempting to make a summary comment on the many factors at work, Stevenson and Cook highlight the weakness of a minority government, inexperience in matters of international finance, the financial crisis coming to a head in 1931. They also conclude that there were serious ideological difficulties for a socialist party operating in a capitalist system. Policies of nationalisation and public works were precluded by the need to secure international approval by reducing the budgetary deficit.

Thus the Labour government of 1929-31 lacked a coherent policy and was faced in 1931 with a conflict between its ideological preferences and the economic realities of the situation in which it operated.[3]

Throughout this period the Liberal MP, Ernest Brown, a member of Bloomsbury Baptist Church from 1930 onwards, remained immensely popular with the majority of Baptists.[4] Also still popular with Baptists was the Labour MP George Lansbury. The *Baptist Times* frequently carried articles by him. A typical example was his statement on the topic, 'Do we believe in God?' in which, blending together his socialism and his Christianity, he argued that: 'The nation needs religion to waken it to a sense of corporate responsibility.'[5] Also, on 5 February 1931 the *Baptist Times* gave space to him for an essay in which he outlined his views on Christian Socialism.[6] The *Baptist Times* also gave regular coverage to Lansbury's 'Christian Socialism Crusade.'[7]

Tension over political matters became apparent during the General Election campaign in October 1931. As usual, the *Baptist Times* published a list of Baptists standing in the election, and this led to accusations of anti-Liberal bias.[8] One might be tempted by such protests to believe that Nonconformists had always and ever been pleased with the manner in which Liberal policies had helped them. It has already been shown that this was clearly not the case. In the opening chapter of this thesis it was noted that Nonconformist tensions between evangelical principles and political allegiances go back well into the late nineteenth century. Whilst refraining from any hint of party-politics, the Baptist leadership did, however, place its full weight behind the proposed Day of Prayer for the Nation. Amongst the Nonconformist luminaries in this call were Douglas Brown and W Y Fullerton.[9]

In this analysis of 1931, attention must be drawn to the debate on the

increasingly serious unemployment situation. The *Baptist Times* was becoming less forward in making broad political statements about the economy and the world recession, although it was still tempted to do so on occasions, as with its acceptance of the League of Nations' analysis of the causes of unemployment.^[10] It was, in fact, shifting its emphasis to considering ways in which the social problems attendant upon unemployment might be ameliorated. Publicly this trend began with a feature written by M E Aubrey (25 March 1931), under the title 'God Bless our Native Land.' Here he argued that: 'It may yet take many of us time to realise that the danger is real, and that, after an era of extravagance, a return to plainer living, simpler pleasures, hard work and unselfish service is the only way out.'^[11] Whilst this feature was still clearly saturated with the ethos of the so-called Protestant Work Ethic (the Puritans were referred to as fine examples of Christian citizenship)^[12] the call for 'unselfish service' can be seen as a key declaration. In the same copy of the *Baptist Times* the abuses of the Unemployment Relief Scheme were bemoaned,^[13] the writer calling for a much tighter line to be enforced. This same writer appeared to be delighted with the 10% decrease in adult unemployment benefit introduced by MacDonald in September 1931.^[14] Equally, Aubrey wrote firmly against the Labour scheme to nationalise banks. He considered this to be playing with fire and 'wholly mischievous.'^[15]

Immediately following the 1931 General Election the *Baptist Times* projected a carefully balanced position with a comment by Aubrey in similar vein to that shown above, and a trade unionist's plea that:

'To preach religion in such circumstances is futile, and these aspects of industrialism inside the workshops, and the despondent appeals for

augmentations of a miserably-reduced State allowance of the unemployed who fain would be employed, daily harass the thoughts of many, like myself, who feel that the best method of interpreting one's beliefs is to stand four-square to the onslaughts on the standard of life of these our weaker brothers.' [16]

No Liberal was invited to join this debate which is probably indicative of the bland public image the party had acquired for itself, particularly over the three years previous to this election. As Stevenson and Cook rightly note: 'Few Liberals in 1931 evinced much fighting spirit. The will to win had vanished. For, in everything but name, the Liberals fought the election as prisoners of a Conservative-dominated Coalition.' [17]

After the September 1931 General Election, the *Baptist Times* made fewer and fewer references to political issues, and the comments which were made tended to be on peripheral topics. On several occasions when international trade was discussed the *Baptist Times* alluded to Cabinet divisions over the Free Trade debate.[18] Significantly, in these articles it generally failed to argue its traditional Free Trade position. It ended with an endorsement of the Chancellor's plea: 'The qualities demanded of us are hard work, strict economy, stern courage, and unfailing patience.' [19] Confirming this view of politicians, Alfred Ellis, in his Baptist Union Assembly presidential address of 1932, presented the notion that '...there is much more wholesomeness in public life today than the contemporary record would lead us to believe.' [20]

From about this time the *Baptist Times* increased its attacks on Lloyd George, with especial concern being expressed at his insistence on the need for re-employment. It considered that this would destroy the National government. In the editor's view, amongst the wider Baptist constituency

individual Labour politicians remained popular, but a dangerously romanticised view of the Liberal Party of the past had become prevalent.[21]

In Baptist terms, however, the political comment of 1932 must be that of J C Carlile in his article of 6 October, entitled, 'Snowden stands alone.' In this he argued that the day would and should soon come when party politics would be laid aside. Significantly, this had not been the line taken by the *Baptist Times* during the office of the earlier Labour government.[22] By this time Snowden was far from popular and in constant dispute with his former Labour colleagues, having defected to the National government at the same time as MacDonald. In the Labour Party N E C analysis of the 1931 election Arthur Henderson also placed much of the blame for their disastrous defeat on election broadcasts by those who had defected from the party. Snowden was identified as chief amongst these. For the *Baptist Times* to commend Snowden for his political wisdom must, therefore, be seen as much more than a personal vote of confidence in a fellow-Nonconformist, albeit a Methodist. It would have been construed by the politically-aware readership as a positive statement in support of the new administration. Similarly, even with the continued failure to make progress in the reform of the educational system the Baptist leadership remained remarkably uncritical of the government.[23]

In terms of Baptist political comment the years 1933 and 1934 have about them the feel of 'lean years' compared with the interesting 1932 debates on unemployment and the earlier 1931 General Election debates. On the other hand, these two years reveal a clear development in Baptist thinking - at least at national leadership level. Broadly speaking, internal Baptist Union issues seem to have taken on a greater significance. This may have resulted from a loss of clear thinking about the national

policies of the government. It may also, however, be an indication of the conscious decision of the leadership of the Baptist Union to steer away from contentious political and social issues.

Indeed, the Baptist Union leadership, in the persons of Aubrey and Carlile, continued their move towards a position of decisive support for the government of national unity. For example, in reporting the growing rift between Liberal and Conservative members of the government the *Baptist Times* expressed considerable concern that this might allow a Labour victory in any election.^[24] Similarly, (and significantly, because it was the first clear offer of support for the government) the leader for 4 January 1934 entitled, 'Our tasks in 1934,' stated: 'All our Churches should put their strength into supporting the present Government, indeed, any Government, in a real national scheme to provide better homes for the people.'^[25] This was linked three weeks later to a positive affirmation of support for MacDonald as having fulfilled his mandate as given at the election two years earlier.^[26]

Then, rather controversially, the news was leaked that Aubrey had lunched with the Prime Minister (at the invitation of the former).^[27] Two months later MacDonald accepted Aubrey's invitation to chair a service of thanksgiving for the centenary of the birth of C H Spurgeon. At this service, held in a packed Royal Albert Hall, MacDonald declared himself a Calvinist. The *Baptist Times* was ecstatic, suggesting that the Prime Minister had the makings of immortality.^[28]

The nature of the friendship between MacDonald and Aubrey is worthy of further study. It has been suggested that they had links either via the Athenaeum Club or as Freemasons in the so-called Kingsgate Lodge. As for the former, MacDonald was elected a member in 1924 under Rule II. This was an invitation from the General Committee to a person 'of outstanding merit

in their field.' Aubrey was not elected under Rule II until 1938. None of the other major Nonconformist political and religious leaders cited in this thesis appear to have been members. There is no substantive evidence for a Freemasonic Lodge at Baptist Church House, let alone membership within it of key political and Baptist figures. The probability is that the friendship between MacDonald and Aubrey - as for that between Lloyd George and J H Shakespeare twenty years earlier - was on a personal level.[29]

By 1934, then, a definite change in the thinking of Baptist leaders on political matters was apparent. Trends discerned in the opening years of the decade had developed to the point where the leadership of the Baptist Union felt able to offer open support for the Conservative-dominated leadership of the National government. It also spoke out increasingly critically against the non-National government members of the Labour and Liberal parties. The older partisan support for the Liberal Party was well on the way to its final breakdown with the failure of the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction under Lloyd George's leadership in 1935. Keith Robbins has also highlighted this change of political stance with reference to Free Churches in general in this period. He argues that whatever conclusion one might come to about the ecclesiastical status and beliefs of the most well-known Free Churchmen of the inter-war period, it is clear that because of their divided political allegiance they could not act together as Free Churchmen. They owed their loyalty to their Cabinet colleagues and to their parties.[30]

Similarly, Bebbington, in his study of 'Baptists and Politics since 1914,' suggests that for this period the *Baptist Times*: '...implied a certain Liberal preference... Otherwise all evidence of Liberalism had faded from the pages.'[31] As has already been seen, Bebbington maintains

that the earlier pattern of communal politics had, by the 1930s, been transformed into a much more complex pattern, within which, however, contentment with the structure of the state provided a thread of continuity.[32]

This is certainly true so far as it goes, but as has already been argued here, there is evidence to indicate that, by the mid-Thirties, the *Baptist Times* was taking a positively pro-Conservative line. Four points may be noted in support of this claim. Firstly, the *Baptist Times* was prepared to offer support in its leading articles for the reduction in unemployment benefit in 1932, although it must be said that in the 1934 Baptist Union Assembly pleasure was expressed on its subsequent return to its earlier level. Secondly, the *Baptist Times* constantly encouraged the acceptance of the notion that unemployment must be endured by increasing personal austerity. This attitude was apparent as early as 1931. Thirdly, prior to the 1931 General Election the *Baptist Times* maintained a constant critique of the Labour government, sometimes provoking open criticism of its own position in its letter columns. After the 1931 General Election and the establishing of the National government such criticism became far less strident. Significantly, correspondents and feature writers frequently stated in the *Baptist Times*, that any government would be better than a Labour government. Fourthly, there was an increasing rapport between Aubrey and MacDonald after the latter's break with the Labour Party to lead the second National government. This became especially apparent by 1934. Koss highlights the dilemma posed for Nonconformists by this changing political picture: 'In August 1931, the situation was further complicated by MacDonald's decision to exchange his Labour administration for a coalition in which Liberal and Conservative leaders were invited to serve. The formation of a National government made a

mockery of Nonconformist political allegiances.'[33] The general trend is summed up by David Thompson, who asserts that fear of socialism made many Nonconformists politically neutral or even Conservative. Thompson cites the example of J D Jones, a leading Congregational minister in the inter-war period, who wrote in 1939: '"Labour has become the alternative Party and young men despairing of any future for Liberalism have transferred their allegiance to it. The effect of all this upon a man like myself, brought up on the old Liberal tradition, is to make me care less and less for party politics. I can be neither Tory nor Labour. I am quite frankly afraid of Socialism."'[34] Thompson's conclusion and Jones' earlier explanation cast considerable light upon the plea constantly heard in articles and letters in the *Baptist Times* in this period for a partyless political future for the nation.

A further keypoint in this deepening disenchantment with Lloyd George's brand of Liberalism can be seen in Aubrey's act of resigning from the Free Church Council Executive in 1935 in protest at its support for the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction.[35] As 1935 opened, 'the Welsh wizard' had shown once again his brilliance in manipulating the media and in creating a sense of expectation that he might have just 'one more trick up his sleeve'. On 17 January 1935 the *Baptist Times* reported news of a hint of Lloyd George's 'New Deal.' It was to be announced at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on 22 February following. The reporter noted that, in his view: 'Mr Lloyd George is still the greatest Parliamentarian of the day. He is perhaps the only one of our statesmen with the sacred spark of genius and it is a great misfortune to the country that he was not included in the National government.'[36]

A week later the *Baptist Times* carried a report of Lloyd George's speech at Bangor on the occasion of his 72nd birthday. Here he had argued that:

'in the midst of unparalleled abundance of money and of all the necessities and even luxuries of life, millions of decent, hard-working people and their families are unemployed and living below the poverty line.' It was noted that he had then made three proposals. On international affairs any system should be based on peace. British foreign policy could only be developed on the understanding that Britain and the United States stand together. Such a policy stance was most urgently needed in the Far East. In the economic field the system of dole was considered both humiliating and wasteful. An inner cabinet should be established to guide the country out of its unemployment crisis. Work schemes for the unemployed should be established. More than 2 million workers should return to the land. Additionally, a Prosperity Loan was required, the reporter commenting: 'This section of the speech came out with a surprise. Mr Lloyd George did not come out as a Free Trader. He said nothing about replacing tariffs. On the contrary, he recognised that they had come to stay for a long time at least. So he would use them ruthlessly...Once more Mr Lloyd George has shown himself a realist.' On the issue of politics the National government should continue in some form. The report ended with Lloyd George's comments that his position was: '...to be elaborated...' The tension heightened.[37]

Speculation continued into February, the *Baptist Times* asking on 7 February whether Ramsay MacDonald - under whom Lloyd George had hinted that he would not serve - might resign in favour of Baldwin. David Lloyd George might then fill ministerial positions for the Dominions or for Defence. Alternatively, he might become a member of the 'super-Cabinet' charged with the task of national reconstruction. The National Free Church Council participated in promoting the infant Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction. It did so very much in the light of troubles at home

(where unemployment remained still above 2 million) and war fever abroad (in Japan, Italy and Germany). The failure of the League of Nations contributed not a little to its decision to support the Council of Action. The two main objectives of the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction were stated to be world peace and the reduction of unemployment in the United Kingdom. The Council was constituted ostensibly on a non-party political basis under the presidency of Lloyd George and the treasurership of Robert Wilson Black.[38] In a jaundiced, but accurate, comment, Payne also suggests that Lloyd George's involvement must be seen in the light of his desire: 'for a restoration of his political influence' and because he 'still retained the rather nostalgic loyalty of many Free Churchmen.' [39] The Council's Manifesto, 'A Call to Action,' was overtly critical of the National government, making amongst other statements the assertion that:

'We have failed to seize the opportunities presented to us to strengthen the foundations of peace and world order. We have been afraid to take risks or show determination in our support of a just dealing with international issues. The same irresolution and lack of courageous purpose have marred our treatment of the grave social and economic problems accentuated and aggravated by the Great War. In other countries, weakness of this order has produced results fatal to right and freedom. In this country the failure of successive Governments to deal adequately with these problems has given rise to widespread cynicism and despair which themselves bring democracy into disrepute and constitute a national danger.' [40]

In early March Lloyd George presented his proposals to the Cabinet. Initially, the *Baptist Times* reacted warmly, commenting: 'For our part, we think that the evils of unemployment, both economic, social and moral, are so terrible that almost any remedy is better than the present policy of doing nothing.'^[41] In April Lloyd George was arguing for the 'New Deal' on Tyneside.^[42] By early June the Executive of the Free Church Council had resolved to sign the Council of Action's manifesto. At this point, Aubrey felt that he must resign from the Executive on the ground that it was being drawn into alliance with a distinct political grouping. Soon he was engaged in earnest correspondence with members of the Executive who could see no harm in signing the manifesto.^[43] Forced into making a public statement by misrepresentations of his position, he pointed out in the *Baptist Times* of 27 June that he had resigned from the Executive of the Free Church Council because he opposed the latter's support of the 'Call to Action.' His stated reason was that: '...it seemed to me to drag the Churches into politics.'^[44] Aubrey felt unable merely to carp at the National government, recognising not just its weaknesses, but also its strengths and successes. He explained that he was not prepared to make any further public comment on the matter. On the Manifesto he was quite blunt: 'It is frankly an electioneering manifesto.' He concluded: 'This statement is not official. It commits no one but myself. I have never written anything that I disliked more intensely and I hope I shall not have to return to the subject.' *The Times* - whose editorial policy was frankly antagonistic to Lloyd George at this time - reproduced Aubrey's statement in full on the same day.^[45]

Letters flooded in to the *Baptist Times* in response to Aubrey's statement. Those published were largely behind Aubrey.^[46] Among those dissociating themselves from Aubrey were Dr Charles Brown (now retired,

but still a force to be reckoned with in Baptist circles) and one from a W H Lewis, Honorary Secretary of the Bradford Baptist Fraternal. A week later there was an extended letter from R W Black.[47] On 29 August S W Hughes also inveighed against Aubrey.[48] Aubrey also received many personal letters of support from Baptist leaders. Three such leaders of particular significance who offered their support were Tydeman Chilvers, Thomas Greenwood and Theo Bamber, who represented the strongly evangelical wing of the Baptist Union.[49] Aubrey also found an unlikely supporter in Mrs D M Gotch, General Secretary of the Free Church Women's Council, although she had to crave confidentiality because her 'President does not see the matter as I do.'[50]

That the *Baptist Times* fully took on board M E Aubrey's concerns is reflected in a feature on 25 July 1935 in which Carlile stated that the *Baptist Times* could give no lead in political matters because its brief was to reflect the variety of views held within the Baptist Union constituent membership. This was a painful time for Aubrey. He was firmly committed to Free Church unity. In his Moderator's address given a year later to the Assembly of the Federal Council of the Free Churches he stated:

'We have passed beyond the stage of dissent and non-conformity, words which suggest that we are out of harmony with the greater part of our country's religious thought. We believe that...we stand as a Federal Council for the convictions of as many of our fellow-countrymen as the Church of England does. So dissent and non-conformity become meaningless words. They are out of date. All suggestions of inequality should be swept away as unchristian, unjust and untrue to fact.'

'...Yet even now the Free Churches are sometimes set aside altogether or given scant and inadequate recognition in public appointments and national services.[51]

'Without invading, as amateurs, economic, political and diplomatic spheres, where even the experts cannot agree, and so compromising the Word of God, given us to speak, by mingling it with opinions which have no weight behind them, we may play our full part in helping to solve social and international problems by evoking goodwill, sympathy, and the love of truth and righteousness without which the people are bound to perish.'[52]

Part of the explanation of why Aubrey felt so unhappy with the Council of Action lies in the fact that he both knew and deeply respected several of the leading MPs in or on the fringe of the National government. Not least of these was Geoffrey Shakespeare, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, and son of Aubrey's predecessor at the Baptist Union, J H Shakespeare.[53] Another was obviously Ernest Brown, about whom the *Baptist Times* had commented two weeks earlier that it was 'especially glad' at Ernest Brown's promotion to Minister of Labour following MacDonald's resignation in favour of Stanley Baldwin.[54] Whilst, most recently, Morris West[55] largely concurs with this idea, it is, however, apparently contradicted by correspondence between Aubrey and Arthur Porritt (occasional columnist in the *Baptist Times*, and editor of *The Christian World*) during July 1935. Porritt declared Baldwin to have been taken over by the Right of the Conservative Party.[56] Aubrey, whilst maintaining that he could not sign the manifesto, was also quite adamant that he had never declared himself a supporter of the National

government.[57] Bebbington has also suggested that Aubrey was adopting a pragmatic position deriving from the failure of Nonconformists to benefit from their efforts on behalf of the Liberals as long ago as the 1906 election. This is borne out in a letter from Aubrey to S W Hughes dated 11 June 1935. Writing of the 1906 alliance between Liberals and Nonconformists he declared that: 'No one in his senses would claim that the blessing of God rested upon that episode in our story. I do not think we have yet recovered from it.'[58]

At the inaugural convention of the Council of Action in July, seventeen of the signatories addressed the gathered crowds. Some 2,000 delegate tickets to the convention were issued. 60 MPs and 100 parliamentary candidates attended. Amongst the speakers were George Lansbury and Harold Macmillan.[59] Lloyd George delivered the main speech, after which it was resolved: 'That a Council of Action be set up to take such measures as may be deemed advisable to secure the return to Parliament of representatives who, independent of party ties, will pledge themselves to co-operate in the next House of Commons with a view to giving effect to the policy adopted at this Convention.'[60]

In fact, at the conference some 350 candidates were proposed for the election later in the year. Dr Sidney Berry, Secretary of the Free Church Council, was deeply concerned. This was precisely the point on which Aubrey had resigned, and that denied by his erstwhile opponents at that time, the Free Church signatories. After debate it was resolved by the Council to put forward candidates only: 'Where candidates are found to be unsatisfactory...It is earnestly hoped there will be no cases of this kind.' It also became clear that such MPs should owe ultimate allegiance to Lloyd George.[61] Significantly, on 4 July, in his report of the Convention for the *Baptist Times*, J C Carlile admitted that he had:

'...signed the Manifesto without any idea of the creation of a new Party. I have supported the National Government, and have no intention of changing my allegiance...The *Baptist Times* used to be regarded as the champion of the Government of which Mr Lloyd George was the head...but times have changed. Mr Aubrey's article of last week made it clear beyond all question that the Free Churches are not at the tail of the political organisation.'

[62]

Nor were matters to be left at that point. A leader on 11 July was entitled 'Politics and the Churches.' Its author - presumably Carlile again - declared it to have been written in the light of recent events: 'Our position is that the Church and the State have different functions...they are complementary.'

[63]

In this same edition of the *Baptist Times* the letters columns reflected in favour of Aubrey's position.

[64]

 Interestingly, although E K H Jordan does not see Carlile and Aubrey's criticisms of the Call to Action as being valid, being, in his view, a reflection of their conservatism, he goes on to concede that: 'Much of the opposition to the Free Church Council's support of the Council of Action was due to the prominence of the notorious figure of Mr Lloyd George, who was very much of a stormy petrel in the political world, and it is true to say that there had been a widespread loss of faith in him in the years that followed the First World War.'

[65]

A massive publicity and information campaign was organised by the Council of Action with the appointment of ten local Councils, each consisting of 200 members. 638 meetings were held at which 3,000 speakers argued for the necessity of a non-party programme. Six million leaflets were distributed. Indeed, by 11 July the *Baptist Times* could report that: 'Already a number of Free Church ministers have offered to assist in

setting up Councils of Action. Some, indeed, have taken the initial step of inviting their colleagues to discuss ways and means; but thousands of volunteers are still needed.'[66]

Despite the reservations of Aubrey and Carlile the *Baptist Times* continued to give considerable coverage to news of the Council of Action. In July 1935, Lloyd George's 'Organising Prosperity' proposals (submitted on request to the Committee of MacDonald's Cabinet) received warm front-page coverage.[67] There Lloyd George highlighted the problem of 2 million unemployed persons with a further 3 million dependents. Such a problem was too big for private enterprise alone. A National Development Board was, in his view, needed. Its brief was to be three-fold. Firstly, to survey industry, agriculture and financial resources, and assess the potentialities of the country as a whole. Secondly, to prepare and approve plans for land development, industrial organisation and improvement of the nation's social services and infrastructure. Thirdly, to consider the application of national credit to financial projects. Lloyd George was suggesting a £250 million government commitment. This, he argued would save in the long term on the payment of 'doles.' Carlile commented:

'These proposals go far in the direction of the socialisation of the state. To some extent the ideas are already at work...Whatever fate may await the proposals, it must be agreed that Mr Lloyd George has tackled a vast subject and deals with problems which have been the despair of statesmen. He stands up to questions which have baffled and defeated Governments. His courage is not of that type which prompts politicians to rush in where angels fear to tread; it is the result of considered judgement and patient enquiry. The tasks awaiting the Government are so tremendous that only a fool would attempt to

increase their difficulties. It must not be permitted that personalities and party feuds shall obscure the national judgement upon great principles and far-reaching policies.'[68]

Carlile also noted that the Executive of the National Free Church Council had decided to: 'advise local Free Church Councils...to associate themselves with any local Councils of Action.'[69] There were, however, four provisos to this recommendation. Firstly, the local group should be acting in line with the resolutions passed at the Annual Assembly of the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction. Secondly, the Free Church Councils should steer clear of party-politics. Thirdly, no action should be taken beyond the agreed statement of 29 June 1935. Finally, care should be taken that action should unite rather than divide local Free Church Councils. Also by this date the leadership of the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction had proposed both a National Council of 50, and the production of pamphlets and leaflets for use in the run-up to the autumn election.[70]

In his inimitable style Aubrey now chose to reflect upon the debate stimulated by his resignation from the National Free Church Council. He reasserted that he was in favour of peace and reconstruction, but that his concerns arose from the party-political slant being given to the Council of Action. He concluded: 'The real question for me is one of the nature and authority of the Church of God...But any Church that is truly Christian should be one to which Mr Baldwin, Mr MacDonald and Mr Lloyd George, if they also are truly Christian, could all give their complete loyalty, whatever their political differences may be.'[71]

That Aubrey was correct in his belief that Lloyd George had a hidden agenda in his leadership of the Council of Action became apparent in the

run-up to the 1935 General Election. The *Baptist Times* noted that Lloyd George's New Deal Campaign was set to begin on 5 September. Its object was the defeat of the government.[72] The dissolution of Parliament was recorded by the *Baptist Times* on 31 October, and as the manifestos were issued the *Baptist Times* began to give them coverage. For example, it commended the government policy of increasing the school-leaving age to 15 years. It was noted that by this measure the unemployment figure could be reduced by as many as 250,000 persons.[73]

The following week a list of candidates with known Baptist sympathies was issued.[74] Despite this the *Baptist Times* reiterated its now clear-cut position on party-politics: 'This journal is not the advocate, certainly not the representative of any one political party. We are concerned with Christian principles and are only political so far as those principles are involved.'[75] Coverage was given to the speeches of a number of candidates, amongst them, Stanley Baldwin, Anthony Eden and Ernest Brown.[76]

The position of the Baptist Union leadership was also made apparent in an article at this time by Emllyn Davies of Merthyr Tydfil entitled, 'The Churches in the Distressed Areas - Review of the South Wales Situation.' Davies concluded: 'It is only the church which has a message of hope and courage for these people, because she is not concerned with the advance of any political creed, but rather with men "for whom Christ died."'[77]

The result of the General Election 'confounded all the prophets,' in the view of the *Baptist Times*. The National government was returned with a majority of 250. Labour had won back 90 of the 100 seats lost in 1931. 'In this respect the new House of Commons is a much better one than the last, for an Opposition strong in numbers and debating power is essential to Parliamentary Government.' Congratulations were in order for Ernest Brown

and Geoffrey Shakespeare, although the *Baptist Times* regretted the defeat of the veteran miners' leader and Baptist lay-preacher, William Adamson. Both Sir Herbert Samuel (leader of the Liberal Party) and the Liberal, Isaac Foot, failed to hold their seats. This led the *Baptist Times* to conclude that 'We fear it is the end of the Liberal Party as a political force. It is not the end of Liberalism itself, however. On the contrary, we incline to the belief that the disappearance of the Liberal Party marks the triumph of Liberal principles'. Regarding the defeat of both Ramsay MacDonald and his son the *Baptist Times* commented: 'Labour regarded him and his son as traitors and hated them with bitter hatred.' It concluded that: 'Persons, not politics, dominated the Election, and above all the personality of Mr Baldwin. It was his election, and the result is a great national tribute to his typically British characteristic virtues of sincerity, moderation, fairness and sound common-sense.' [78]

On the other hand, a letter in the pages of the *Baptist Times* for 28 November 1935 put a different complexion on events. The West Midlands Area Superintendent, John Cripps, wrote: 'I do not suppose that any election in this country for many years has been marked by so many abstentions which have been the result, not of indifference or mental laziness, but of prolonged and agonised political thinking.' [79] Cripps went on to reveal his Liberal sympathies with a call for the introduction of proportional representation.

Reflecting on the disappointing results for Council of Action-affiliated candidates in the election, a meeting was convened under Lloyd George's chairmanship. The latter: 'emphasised that the group was drawn indiscriminately from all Parties and was not an attempt to form a definite and separate Party.' [80] The *Baptist Times* editor refrained from comment. Lloyd George's disappointment in the poor showing of the Council

of Action-inclined candidates was not unique. By 1937, indeed, apathy had become very apparent in British politics. At the Richmond by-election less than 48% of voters came out (28,255 out of 59,322 persons). Further, numbers had been falling drastically in House of Commons debates. During the debates on Sir John Simon's Factories Bill there had never been as many as 100 members present. And to the Commons' shame - in the view of Arthur Porritt - at one stage of the debate on the Gresford mine disaster there had been 11 government supporters (out of 428), 22 Labour MPs (out of 157) and 7 Liberals (out of 21). Porritt could only conclude: 'This will never do!'^[81] This apathy was continued at the West Birmingham, Stalybridge and other by-elections during 1937. At Street the Council of Action-supported Labour candidate, the Rev Gordon Lang, lost.^[82] At the Ilford by-election only 37% of voters came out.

In the midst of this electoral apathy the discussion also moved to the inevitable resignation from public life of Baldwin and MacDonald. One or other of them had been Premier since 1923. Religiously, MacDonald had lost touch with the Free Churches after the death in November 1923 of John Clifford who had been a close friend. But when MacDonald finally resigned from Parliament in the autumn of 1937 it was J C Carlile who produced a two-page 'Memoir and Appreciation' for the *Baptist Times*.^[83] Arthur Porritt also spoke well of his principles: 'It was his fate to shatter the political Party which he had spent a lifetime in creating...He felt it was his duty to put country before party at all costs, and the cost to him was the loss of priceless friendships.'^[84] After MacDonald's death, later that month, Arthur Porritt could comment with some edge: 'If appreciation was withheld from Ramsay MacDonald in his last years, he has been signally honoured in death. No Prime Minister since Gladstone has received so much homage.'^[85] When Baldwin resigned, J C Carlile, in a *Baptist Times*

leader, commended him for his calmness during the abdication crisis: 'No praise will exaggerate the services Stanley Baldwin rendered to this country in that dark and difficult period.'[86]

Porritt was one of many who were not sure of Neville Chamberlain's ability to lead the nation. He wrote in the *Baptist Times* for 18 March 1937: 'Though he has been in the political front line for twenty years, Mr Neville Chamberlain has not yet made himself popularly understood.'[87] Porritt also expressed concern at Chamberlain's weak public *persona* in contrast to Hitler, Mussolini and Roosevelt. He also had a poor voice for wireless broadcasts. Another sign of the political confusion of the period lay in the expulsion of Sir Stafford Cripps and Charles Trevelyan from the Labour Party. A strong opposition, the *Baptist Times* argued, was essential for the well-being of the nation.[88]

Within weeks, however, Chamberlain had produced his sixth Budget and this proved radical. Porritt felt that it would please Labour more than the Tories. Its two highlights were the 'ingenious' avoidance of indirect taxation and the National Defence Contribution Tax which was aimed specifically at the arms industry. Porritt observed: 'One might almost imagine that Mr Neville Chamberlain has been dining with Lord Snowden.'[89] But when, in February 1938, the Conservatives lost the Ipswich by-election to Labour, Porritt was forced to comment: 'Here, possibly, the Government felt, for the first time, the loss of Mr Baldwin's influence. He inspired a degree of confidence among Free Churchmen which Mr Neville Chamberlain, who cannot expect to inherit it, has not yet won. He has yet to show that ingratiating touch by which Mr Baldwin induced Nonconformists to vote Conservative.'[90]

This government defeat was followed in June by defeat at West Fulham. The *Baptist Times* was critical of the Premier, quoting *The Manchester*

Guardian as saying: '[This] will indicate to the outside world that Mr Chamberlain's overtures to them have not the backing of a united people.'^[91] This was again reflected in May when the National Labour candidate was defeated at Lichfield. The *Baptist Times* did not hesitate to assert that the socialist victory had been due to a nationwide loss of faith in the government's foreign policy.^[92] Of the Oxford by-election on 27 October 1938 Porritt wrote: '[it is] virtually a referendum on a single issue - the conduct of foreign affairs.'^[93] At the end of 1938 Porritt reflected that in six by-elections held since Munich the government had received 146,615 votes, and the opposition parties 146,663 votes. He predicted a General Election prior to the huge increase in arms expenditure that was due in the next budget.^[94] The distrust felt for Neville Chamberlain manifested itself more forcefully in a bitter comment from Arthur Porritt: 'For once Mr Neville Chamberlain spoke from his heart...'^[95]

By early 1939 the threat of impending European war was obvious to all. So too was the abject failure of the League of Nations to stay the outbreak of war. Another manifesto was, therefore, issued by the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction outlining the turns in world events since 1935 and asserting that: 'Since 1935 the years have been marked by complete failure on the part of this country to give courageous leadership in support of a constructive policy of peace.'^[96] Within months the country was, of course, at war.

The debates surrounding the launch of the Council of Action give a useful clue to the political interests of the Baptist leadership during the 1930s. Leaders such as Aubrey, and later Carlile saw the Council of Action as an opportunist move by Lloyd George to create a multi-party

grouping which would fill the void left by the effective parliamentary demise of the Liberal Party. Three factors were seen as creating the need for this grouping: the high rate of unemployment, fear of war and the rise of the dictators. From the Baptist perspective lack of grass-roots support for the Council was determined by the withdrawal of support first by Aubrey and then by Carlile. The leadership of the Baptist Union was in no doubt that the best political leadership could be given by the existing all-party Conservative-dominated National government. This was especially the case under Baldwin's premiership. In fact, of course, in the 1935 General Election the Conservatives won an overwhelming majority. Council of Action candidates did very poorly.

Bebbington has also noted that for this period: 'Overall the pattern is one of change from Liberal monopoly to Liberal exclusion.'^[97] By the 1930s, the Liberal Party had lost credibility as a viable opposition party. Yet there remained a deep, almost nostalgic, longing on the part of many Baptists for the great days of Liberal consensus. What becomes apparent then, in 1935, is a coming together of two crucial factors. The general shift towards Conservatism was further compounded by the reaction of the Baptist Union leadership to the Council of Action. The loss of Old-Liberal allegiances, opposition to Labour Party policies, and a shift towards political neutrality which was *de facto* Conservatism was focussed by the Council of Action in 1935. For some Baptists the Council of Action and the image of a revitalised Lloyd George resulted in a rekindling of nostalgia for the old chapel-Liberal nexus. Yet they too were disappointed and even disillusioned, for that could not be. Indeed, for others, the continued presence of Lloyd George within the Liberal Party was the strongest single reason for their seeking other political allegiances. Times, national politics and Baptist aspirations had moved on. As Hastings

puts it: '...caution, retrenchment, moderation and good sense were now to be the deciding qualities of Free Church polity in regard to their own and national affairs.'[98]

These points having been made, it must also be observed that there was also a comparative political apathy among Baptists during the later Thirties. This was clearly a reflection of the general apathy to politics which is a feature of this period of British history. This apathy deepened on the resignation of Baldwin and MacDonald in 1937. Baptists never came to trust Chamberlain. It is clear that, broadly-speaking, Baptist opinion-formers were, by this time, largely pro-Conservative but anti-Chamberlain. It must be said, however, that for very many Baptists, as the old Liberal-Nonconformist alliance had been eroded by both political fragmentation and denominational stresses and strains, their political allegiances quite simply had become confused.

Footnotes to Chapter 4:

1. *Baptist Times*, 9/4/31 p 249.
2. *Baptist Times*, 27/8/31 p 599; 3/9/31 p 615.
3. Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p 61.
4. *Baptist Times*, 26/2/31 pp 149, 152; 25/6/31 p 445; 2/7/31 p 459; 23/7/31 pp 514, 516; 30/7/31 p 553; 19/11/31 p 813.
5. *Baptist Times*, 22/1/31 p 67.
6. *Baptist Times*, 5/2/31 p 99.
7. See for example, *Baptist Times*, 19/3/31 p 220; 16/7/31 p 497.
8. *Baptist Times*, 22/10/31 pp 741f.
9. cf *The Times*, 26/10/31 p 19.
10. *Baptist Times*, 12/2/31 p 116.
11. *Baptist Times*, 5/3/31 p 163.
12. On the debate about the nature of this ethic see M Todd's *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge, 1987).
13. *Baptist Times*, 14/5/31 p 347; 11/6/31 p 415; 13/8/31 pp 563, 567.
14. *Baptist Times*, 3/9/31 p 615.
15. *Baptist Times*, 5/11/31 p 775.
16. *Baptist Times*, 5/11/31 p 775.
17. Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p 99.
18. *Baptist Times*, 4/2/32 p 75; 28/4/32 p 291; 6/10/32 p 683.
19. *Baptist Times*, 21/4/32 p 271.
20. *Baptist Times*, 5/5/32 p 307.
21. cf Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, pp 145ff.
22. *Baptist Times*, 6/10/32 pp 687f. *The Times* detailed the magnitude of the Labour collapse in its 28 October edition (pp 12ff).

23. This is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.
24. *Baptist Times*, 23/11/33 p 799.
25. *Baptist Times*, 4/1/34 p 2.
26. *Baptist Times*, 25/1/34 p 63.
27. *Baptist Times*, 8/3/34 p 163.
28. *Baptist Times*, 3/5/34 p 317.
29. Personal correspondence with Sarah Dodgson, librarian at the Athenaeum. cf Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp 54f.
30. Robbins, 'Free Churchmen and the Twenty Years Crisis,' pp 346f.
31. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics since 1914,' p 79.
32. *ibid*, pp 90f.
33. Koss, *Nonconformist Conscience*, p 184. cf A Thorpe, 'I am in the Cabinet: J H Thomas' Decision to join the National government in 1931,' *English Historical Review* (Oxford, 1991), 64:155, pp 389ff.
34. D Thompson, in *The Testing of the Churches, 1932-1982* (London, 1982), ed R Davies, p 108.
35. *ibid*, p 109. cf S Koss, 'Lloyd George and Nonconformity: the last rally,' *English Historical Review*, LXXXIX (1974), pp 77 to 108; S Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, Cap 9, 'The Last Rally,' pp 187ff. cf M West, 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey: Part 1,' pp 204ff.
36. *Baptist Times*, 17/1/35 p 51.
37. *Baptist Times*, 24/1/35 p 71. cf *The Times*, 18/1/31 p 7; 26/1/31 p 14.
38. Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, pp 154ff.
39. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 207.
40. Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, pp 155f. See also: *Baptist Times*, 13/6/35 p 439.
41. *Baptist Times*, 14/3/35 p 203.
42. *Baptist Times*, 4/4/35 p 259.
43. See, for example: Aubrey to Ernest Brown, 7/6/35; S W Hughes to Aubrey, 12/6/35; Aubrey to Hughes, 14/6/35; Sidney Berry to Aubrey, 11/6/35; Aubrey to Berry, 12/6/35; Hughes to Aubrey, 12/6/35; Aubrey to Hughes, 14/6/35, 17/6/35; 18/6/35; Arthur Porritt to Aubrey, 15/6/35; Aubrey to Porritt, 17/6/35; William Olney to Aubrey, 20/6/35; Hughes to Aubrey, 21/6/35; Aubrey to Olney, 24/6/35; Aubrey to J D Jones, 26/6/35; J D Jones to Aubrey, 20/6/35; Aubrey to J C Carlile, 5/7/35. See also: telegrams to R W Black, S Berry and S W Hughes, 11/6/35.
44. *Baptist Times*, 27/6/35 p 475. The debate in the *Baptist Times* parallels that in *The Times* for this period. cf *The Times*, 15/6/35 p 13 (Critical leader accusing the New Deal of being more 'of political mischief than of Christianity.');
- 18/6/35 p 12 (Letter from S W Hughes attacking the stance taken by *The Times*' leader writer.); 19/6/35 p 10 (Letters from J S Lidgett in support of Lloyd George; V A Caalet MP, expressing the view that the Council was a fruitless exercise.); cf the letters columns of 20/6/35 p 10, 22/6/35 p 10, 4/7/35 p 10, 5/7/35 p 10, 6/7/35 p 8. Aubrey actually wrote confidentially to Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*, explaining his position on 13/6/35.
45. *The Times*, 27/6/35 p 12.
46. See, for example, *Baptist Times*, 18/7/35 p 532.
47. *Baptist Times*, 25/7/35 p 553.
48. *Baptist Times*, 29/8/35 p 632. See also: *Baptist Times*, 1/8/35 p 564; 8/8/35 p 584; 15/8/35 p 600; 22/8/35 p 616; 5/9/35 p 648; 3/10/35 p 712.
49. Tydeman Chilvers to Aubrey, 8/7/35; Aubrey to Chilvers, 9/7/35; Thomas Greenwood to Aubrey, 27/6/35; Aubrey to Greenwood, 29/6/35; Theo Bamber to Aubrey, 27/6/35.

50. Mrs D M Gotch to Aubrey, 1/7/35.
51. M E Aubrey, *The Free Churches in our National Life* (London, nd), pp 10f.
52. *ibid*, p 15.
53. *Baptist Times*, 28/3/35 p 241.
54. *Baptist Times*, 13/6/35 p 443. See also: Bebbington, 'Baptist and Politics,' p 83.
55. West, 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey: Part 1,' pp 205f, 212.
56. Porritt to Aubrey, 15/7/35. Porritt's original letter, (and his subsequent correspondence) was written on National Liberal Club letterhead.
57. Aubrey to Arthur Porritt, 17/7/35. cf Aubrey to S W Hughes, 11/6/35.
58. Aubrey to S W Hughes, 11/6/35.
59. *Baptist Times*, 27/6/35 p 479.
60. *Baptist Times*, 27/6/35 p 456.
61. *Baptist Times*, 4/7/35 p 494.
62. *Baptist Times*, 4/7/35 p 494.
63. *Baptist Times*, 11/7/35 p 515.
64. *Baptist Times*, 11/7/35 p 516.
65. Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, pp 163f.
66. *Baptist Times*, 11/7/35 p 521.
67. *Baptist Times*, 18/7/35 p 529.
68. *Baptist Times*, 18/7/35 p 530.
69. *ibid*.
70. *Baptist Times*, 18/7/35 p 535.
71. *Baptist Times*, 1/8/35 p 563.
72. *Baptist Times*, 22/8/35 p 619.
73. *Baptist Times*, 31/10/35 p 791.
74. *Baptist Times*, 7/11/35 p 806. See also *Baptist Times*, 21/11/35 p 846.
75. *Baptist Times*, 7/11/35 p 811.
76. *Baptist Times*, 14/11/35 p 831.
77. *Baptist Times*, 17/10/35 p 757.
78. *Baptist Times*, 21/11/35 p 851.
79. *Baptist Times*, 20/11/35 p 868.
80. *Baptist Times*, 5/12/35 p 917.
81. *Baptist Times*, 4/3/37 p 167. On Porritt, see his autobiography: *The Best I Remember* (London, 1922).
82. *Baptist Times*, 6/5/37 p 347.
83. *Baptist Times*, 18/11/37 pp 864f.
84. *Baptist Times*, 18/11/37 p 871.
85. *Baptist Times*, 2/12/37 p 911.
86. *Baptist Times*, 22/4/37 p 299; 3/6/37 p 423. Significantly, the *Baptist Times* had supported Baldwin throughout the crisis and had, in fact, never really had full confidence in Edward VIII, seeing him as somewhat weak and decadent. cf *Baptist Times*, 23/1/36 p 69; *Annual Report: 1935*, p 7; 23/1/36 pp 71f; 30/1/36 pp 81f; 6/2/36 pp 96f; 9/4/36 p 274; 27/8/36 p 655; 22/10/36 p 803; 12/11/36 p 859; 19/11/36 p 881; 26/11/36 p 901; 10/12/36 p 959; 3/12/36 p 922; 10/12/36 pp 961, 963; 17/12/36 pp 984f; 17/12/36 p 979; 17/12/36 p 983; 17/12/36 p 987; 28/1/37 p 65; 1/4/37 p 247; *Annual Report: 1937*, p 7.
87. *Baptist Times*, 18/3/37 p 207.
88. *Baptist Times*, 8/4/37 p 267.
89. *Baptist Times*, 29/4/37 p 377.
90. *Baptist Times*, 24/2/38 p 147.
91. *Baptist Times*, 14/4/38 p 287.
92. *Baptist Times*, 12/5/38 p 367.
93. *Baptist Times*, 27/10/38 p 807.
94. *Baptist Times*, 1/12/38 p 907.

95. *Baptist Times*, 21/7/38 p 567.
96. *Baptist Times*, 27/2/39 p 157.
97. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 76.
98. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p 263.

CHAPTER 5

Major Themes: 1931 to 1939

Social Analysis - change and response

During the years 1931 to 1939 debates over social affairs continued in the *Baptist Times* with greater or lesser fervour depending largely upon which item of legislation or discussion was before Parliament or under consideration in the national press at that particular time. The agenda was clearly set by central political conditions. Thus, the social needs of the country, education, alcohol abuse and unemployment all occupied the attention of Baptists at various times. Additionally, such items as the defence of the Christian Sunday, concern at Roman Catholic strength and militancy, and anger at the issue of tithe payments also featured increasingly as the decade progressed. The decade also revealed steady, but definite, changes in the overall position of Baptists on these issues.

This analysis must begin by focusing on what may be termed 'charitable response.' The 1 January 1931 copy of the denominational journal contained a significant comment:

'The many appeals in our columns indicate the extent and variety of social welfare work undertaken by Baptists. It is usually supposed that other organisations have practically a monopoly of social service, and Baptist work being separate from, and to an extent independent of the denomination; but the fact is that Baptists have good reason to be justly proud of what their churches are doing for the down and out.'^[1]

It may be imagined from this comment that Baptist churches were heavily involved in alleviating the social problems attendant on the deepening economic slump. However, it seems clear that Baptist response was, at this stage, far more often seen in terms of the various "City Missions" rather than of local churches, as, for example, in the report of the Christmas work at the Shoreditch Tabernacle.[2] Indeed, it might be further argued that this attitude resulted from a lack of direction from the denominational leadership. Significantly, in a major feature, 'Some Implications of our Faith,' again in the 1 January 1931 edition of the *Baptist Times*, Dr John MacNeill, President of the Baptist World Alliance, made no allusion to any personal social dimension.[3] However, this attitude was by no means universal, nor was it sinister. In all probability it resulted from lack of thought rather than aloofness from the social evils of the day. Indeed, just a month later a *Baptist Times* leader began to address this very issue. Headed, 'Saying and Doing,' it made a fervent plea to the churches for a combination of evangelical preaching and social action. It asserted, for example, that: 'There is never any justification for separating these two essential parts of the ministry...It is doing the will of God by which we come to assurance of reality. It is the active life of goodness that demonstrates the value and the power of the preaching.'[4] Forceful as this leader appears, it was a full year before details of widespread social response to the prevailing conditions began to appear with any regularity in the *Baptist Times*.

Turning to the specific question of unemployment, it is clear that by 1932 this was the major social concern for Baptists, as indeed it was for others. The tone of debate was set in a most strident *Baptist Times* leader on 4 February 1932 entitled, 'And Nero Fiddled.' Although unemployment was singled out as one of the social evils to which the Nonconformist churches

were to address themselves if they were to arrest the decline in their numbers, the writer made the pertinent comment: 'Are the Free Churches, any more than other Churches, entering into the lives of people? Are they desperately concerned with the conditions that might well be a nightmare to those who really consider them?'[5] Then, some three months later, the features, reports and news items began to flood in to the *Baptist Times*. These fit into four broad categories.

Firstly, there were reports of various religious and secular bodies working with the unemployed whose aims the *Baptist Times* encouraged and the churches espoused. Among the many groups whose work was reported were the newly established British Institute of Adult Education,[6] the National Council of Social Service,[7] the Unemployed Brotherhood,[8] and the Christian Social Council - whose aims were to establish rest rooms, clubs and meetings, workshops, the provision of allotments and help in special circumstances.[9] On 22 December 1932 the *Baptist Times* issued a call for special action for the unemployed. At the same time it endorsed the Prime Minister's call to the churches which had ended with the words: 'I count on all the Churches and Chapels and the British Legion and all other bodies with halls or accommodation suitable for such centres to lend them as often as possible and free of charge to bodies working for the unemployed.'[10]

Secondly, there were reports of actual initiatives taken by Baptists or others. These included a report of action for the unemployed in Dundee based on a 'craft club;'[11] an article calling for more Baptist involvement with the unemployed, exemplifying the writer's own experience in Little Bromwich providing a 'tea concert' to take people's minds off their plight, the word 'unemployed' being rigidly banned from all conversation and discussion at these events;[12] a report outlining a scheme of work

creation in Croydon sponsored by the churches;[13] and a report on the care club at Queen's Road Baptist Church, Coventry. At the time of writing (summer 1932) this latter club had 314 members, and provided a reading room, gramophone, games room, hair-cutting facilities, boot repairs and dinners.[14]

There is the very real possibility, therefore, that some Baptist churches, heavily involved in the practical problems facing their communities, were simply too busy and too caught up in the reality of distressed people to bother to report their work in the *Baptist Times*. Detailed local studies alone can settle this point.

Thirdly, the Baptist Union gave general encouragement for an active social response to the problem of unemployment. This included a warning of the dangers of a spirit of condescension in those working with the unemployed,[15] and the reporting and endorsing of a Salvation Army assertion that unemployment was the greatest social evil of the day - greater even than alcohol abuse. In response to the latter report the *Baptist Times* asked: 'Is it not possible for the Free Churches to combine in areas to provide the premises and the necessary supervision?'[16] One of the practical ways in which the Baptist Union lent its support to this campaign is seen in its permitting the use of Baptist Church House as a reception point for gifts of clothing.[17] Perhaps this whole issue is best summed up in a leader published on 17 November 1932: 'We want them to know that so far as the Churches are concerned, there is not only sympathy and help in various forms of charity, but a very real desire to assist in changing the economic conditions which have become a burden too heavy to be borne.'[18]

Fourthly, *Baptist Times* articles frequently made comment on wider issues of social deprivation. For example, on 4 August 1932 a major article in

the *Baptist Times* analysed 'The Homes of England - a National Disgrace.' It concluded that: 'Rebels are bred in slum areas. The best argument for Socialism is the unworthy homes of England...The cure for unemployment is work, not the dole. The remedy for bad housing is building under better conditions.' Although not an official Baptist Union policy statement its assumption that the greatest danger of the slump was that socialism might become ascendant largely reflects the perceptions of the Baptist Union leadership at this time.[19]

During 1933 and 1934 the *Baptist Times* continued a policy of encouraging support for the unemployed. Thus it reported the establishment of classes for the unemployed at Liverpool University.[20] Social work amongst the needy sponsored by various Baptist churches was regularly covered.[21] A report from the Rhondda, for example, stated that: 'Most of the present problems are somewhat related to the industrial depression which has covered the area for a number of years. A number of churches have been brought to the verge of collapse, particularly those burdened with building debts, and we are deeply concerned with their financial plight.'[22]

The *Annual Report* of the Baptist Union Council had already noted the financial problems of churches in the more severely depressed areas as early as the end of 1931:

'The financial resources of our Churches are so disrupted by industrial conditions that many of them are unable to maintain ministries, even to raise the minimum which would bring them within the help of our [Sustentation] Fund. In one South Wales area alone about 60 Churches were without ministers, many for this reason, at the end of the year. Other parts of the country have the same difficulty.

This means that there is far less employment for ministers than there was, and perhaps we should be grateful that, compared with so many industries and professions, our unemployment numbers are so low.'[23]

At the same time the *Baptist Times* introduced its readers to some of the wider issues of the recession. The Baptist Union leadership affirmed its general abhorrence of the social deprivation that attended unemployment. Speaking of the problem of slum conditions, a feature on 23 February 1933 stated: 'We are convinced that the fate of the National Government will be determined by the problem of unemployment...The moral argument is irresistible. There is only one attitude for the Christian: he is definitely and determinedly in support of any rational movement for slum clearance.'[24] The Baptist Union Assembly for 1933 expressed its sympathy and support for the unemployed, and urged the Government to press ahead with urgency in its task of resolving the unemployment crisis and in slum clearance.[25] The Assembly that year was held in Glasgow. In Assembly week a general report on the problems of deprived areas concluded: 'It is the Church's day of opportunity and she is not entirely missing out...Our ministers in the distressed areas are entitled to honour and support. On the whole they are doing splendid work. It is not possible for publicity to be given to the best work that is done in the amelioration of suffering and the help of the victims of the vicious social order.'[26] In fact, seven 'social issues' were placed before the Assembly for debate. These included 'Unemployment and Housing,' 'Sunday Observance,' 'Temperance,' 'Gambling,' 'The Kinematograph,' 'Freedom of Conscience,' and 'Peace and Disarmament.'[27]

R Rowntree Clifford of Barking Road Tabernacle in the East End of London brought as his Baptist Union presidential address for 1933, 'Christ's

Challenge to the Church.' It was a model of contemporary Christian thinking.[28] Just three paragraphs have been selected from this address in order to give some idea of the depth of his thinking:

'The true province of the Church is to mediate the mind and spirit of Jesus by life and word so that the ideals of the State should make...social evils impossible. It should inspire its members with the glories of its redemptive ministry and quicken them to translate by...sacrifice Christian values into public life.'[29]

'Never was Church life harder than it is today. An entirely new situation has arisen in changed conditions, in the wider interests and constant migration of the people, in the breaking up of the family life, in the growing secularisation of the Sunday, in the passion for pleasure, in the wonders of wireless, in the mechanisation of life, in the indolent scepticism, in the daring and unregulated thinking, in the neglect of the Bible and the decadence of Public Worship. The passion for social welfare captures many who hold the ideals of the Church, but they spend themselves in all kinds of social enterprises, and recognise no Church loyalty. The place, power and usefulness of the Church are being seriously challenged, and the situation demands the statesmanship and sacrifice of all who love our Lord and His Church.'[30]

'Christ needs to be lifted up among the poor. The spiritual well-being of the rich, too, will be served immensely thereby. As one has said: "The state of many Churches in the poorest populations is a disgrace to common Christianity, showing a lack of energy, sympathy and self-

sacrifice on the part of the well-to-do, which reveals that for many the Christian religion is but a sentimental consolation or a conventional formality, and not devotion to God and man." We need to do to death the wicked fallacy that anything in the way of ministry and buildings is good enough for the poor. The dilapidated, ill-kept and poverty-stricken edifice with a ministry to match is a reproach to the Name of Christ.'[31]

Rowntree Clifford concluded his address with a call for the provision of high quality evangelistic and social centres for the poor.[32]

These statements must be held firmly in context, for whilst a first-hand report from the Rhondda indicated severe crisis for the churches and communities there, a report in the *Baptist Times* only one week prior to this had spoken solely of the evangelistic needs, and had made no reference whatever to the social concerns of the churches.[33] Moreover, by the end of 1933, the Baptist Union Council was convinced that the worst of the slump was over. Of the national situation the *Annual Report* for 1933 could say optimistically:

'The year 1933 is likely to be remembered in the world as that of new hope and of the beginning of recovery after a long and difficult period of economic depression...Revival in industry and commerce, with a fairer and freer distribution of the earth's natural wealth, should help to diminish bitterness and despair, and create a kindlier sentiment between nations and classes.'[34]

Yet Rowntree Clifford's presidential address of 1933 had made a considerable impression. Gilbert Laws' presidential address the following

year explored the same general areas in most perceptive manner. In his, 'The Local Church the Strength of the Denomination' he made three significant assertions. Firstly, the strength of a local church does not lie in mere numbers.^[35] Secondly, Baptists were not to think that a church cannot be strong without wealth.'^[36] Thirdly, many local churches have been strong though lacking the presence of socially prominent people.^[37]

In this context it is interesting to note that the Olney (Sutcliff) Church could report of 1934: 'In spite of local trade depression, good work has been done during the year.'^[38] Had the message got home? A further news item on 5 July 1934 commented on the work with the unemployed being conducted by the Oldham Baptist Churches. Their centre catered for several hundred men, and provided lecture concerts, boot repair classes, facilities for carpentry, PT and reading. Most significantly, it had been running for four years and involved many of the church members.^[39]

The *Baptist Times* also carried statements from the Council of Ministers on Social Questions,^[40] and at the beginning of 1934 expressed relief and optimism at the fall in the figures for the unemployed.^[41]

In summary, then, support for the unemployed evidenced by the *Baptist Times* continued throughout the first half of the decade, but was apolitical in nature. Many of the churches were showing signs of being severely affected by the ravages of the slump. There was good work being done under local Baptist banners, and it is likely that much work was simply not reported to the denominational press. The Baptist Union leadership appears to have concentrated on the only 'safe' area of interest, that of slum clearance. Whether this was because of the lead given on the fringe of the Cabinet by the Baptist, Geoffrey Shakespeare,

is impossible to determine. Yet much of the thinking exhibited within the *Baptist Times* was frankly naive. Not least in this regard was the confident assertion by the Baptist Union Council that the slump was over by the end of 1933. Again, the chief geographical focus of the *Baptist Times* was on South Wales. This was probably a reflection of the personal connections with and empathy for the principality felt by Aubrey and Carlile. These points having been made, notable exceptions to this general trend were to be found in leaders such as Rowntree Clifford^[42] (Baptist Union President in 1933) and Gilbert Laws (Baptist Union President in 1934). They both emphatically insisted on an integrated view of the world, its needs and the Christian response to those needs.

To move on through the decade, the Baptist Union Assembly in May 1935 resolved to: 'express deep sympathy with their fellow-citizens who cannot find employment and their prayerful hope that...means may be found greatly to alleviate the material hardship and the mental distress to which they are exposed.'^[43] Aubrey, in this as in so many other areas of social comment, was able to catch the spirit of the denomination when, in July 1935, (possibly as a direct reaction to Council of Action proposals) he explained his position on the Church's response to unemployment: 'It seems to me that every Church might have its "Unemployment Committee" to find work, or make work, if by any means possible, first for its own fellowship, then for any others it can help, and also to minister to the spiritual needs, as well as to the physical, of the workless, so that they may never feel they are friendless or unwanted.'^[44]

J C Carlile produced another thoughtful article on this subject for the 26 November 1936 edition of the *Baptist Times*, under the title, 'The Kingdom, the Churches and the Unemployed.'^[45] It is noteworthy that the depth of Carlile's commitment to the working man had been most clearly

seen nearly fifty years earlier in his involvement in the 1889 Dock Strike. Carlile had stood alongside such as Ben Tillett, F N Charrington, Tom Mann, Clem Edwards, Hannen Swaffer and Cardinal Manning in support of the dockers.[46] It is therefore interesting at this point to observe the coverage given by the *Baptist Times* to the Dock Strike Re-union which took place in October 1936. This interest arose again at the Dock Strike Jubilee in 1939. On that occasion J C Carlile gave the event 2/3 page in the *Baptist Times*. [47]

July 1936 also saw the passing of new Unemployment Assistance Regulations through Parliament. Whilst Arthur Porritt, under his 'Men and Matters' banner, felt able to congratulate the Minister of Labour, Ernest Brown, [48] others were far from happy. Brown had come under attack in the letters column of the *Baptist Times* as early as 4 June 1936. [49] The Welsh miners specifically took issue with the imposition of a means test. [50] Such was the pressure exerted on Brown and his Ministry that within a week of Porritt's congratulatory note the minister was promising the opportunity of further debate. [51] The argument continued awhile in the *Baptist Times*, at least one correspondent being prepared to argue that the means test was good. [52] In fact, the interest in this particular subject resulted in its being chosen for a *Baptist Times* Essay Competition. [53] Such was the strength of the debate and the attack on Ernest Brown that the latter was permitted an article on 26 November 1936, 'What the Ministry of Labour is doing.' [54] Facing Baptist antagonism was clearly a new experience for Brown.

As 1937 opened, the *Baptist Times*, in the person of Arthur Porritt, again commended Ernest Brown, this time on the introduction of the Special Areas Act. [55] There at last appeared to be grounds for optimism. Taking its cue from the renewed interest in the Special Areas stimulated by the new Act

the Baptist Union called for the churches to give assistance to the Special Areas via the General Superintendents or the Evangelical Alliance.[56] In fact, initial support for these proposals was retracted later by such as Arthur Porritt who felt that they were too conservative.[57] Porritt was ever one to cut through the cant of *political-speak*. In the *Baptist Times* of 18 March 1937[58] he reproduced figures from the previous week's newspapers indicating that there were currently 49 millionaires in Britain, 60 people with incomes of £75,000 to 100,000 per annum and 69 with annual incomes greater than £100,000. By way of contrast one newspaper had cited the case of a 64-year old workless man living on 12/- a week poor relief. His rented room - which possessed water only - cost him 6/-; a corporation bath, 3d; clothes, 8d; candles, soap, etc, 6d; laundry, 7d; food, 4/-. His diet on one day was bread, 2d; meat pie, 3d; and beetroot, 2d. These moves were swiftly followed by the expression of pleasure at the introduction of Sir John Simon's Factory Bill,[59] and for Ernest Brown's new proposals on the extension of unemployment insurance which would now account for £17,250,000 per annum.[60]

On 22 April 1937 the *Baptist Times* carried a full page feature by Sir Percy Alden entitled, 'Urgent Social Problems.' Alden argued for the redistribution of wealth, of the population (to areas of employment vacancies) and of food. He called for all the citizens of Britain to have the right to milk, fruit, vegetables, meat, sunshine and air. He also expressed concern at the high level of coal burning in industry.[61] Sir Percy also played his part in the debate which took place in early 1938 on the state of the Health Service. The first mention in the *Baptist Times* came on 6 January 1938.[62] The following week Alden's wide-ranging feature article discussed 'The Health of the Nation.'[63] It clearly

sparked a latent interest amongst Baptists judging by the letters which it evoked.[64]

On 4 May 1937 the *Daily Telegraph* could record - under the banner, 'April's Record of Unemployment':

'April marks a distinct stage in the conquest of unemployment. Not only is employment up by 150,000, but the total by which unemployment is down comes within 6,000 of that remarkable figure. In other words, the high employment level is not in this case due primarily to the absorption into industry of the "bulge" now passing out of the schools. The great bulk of the people who found jobs in the month under review are those previously registered as unemployed. Thanks to the transfer of cases from the Public Assistance Board, we now have fuller information as to the term of unemployment. Analysis of the figures gives a tolerably satisfactory result. More than half of the unemployed who applied for allowances had been out of work for less than three months and very nearly two-thirds for less than six months.'

Yet as late as 1938 a group of Baptist ministers from Merthyr Tydfil had approached the Moral and Social Questions Department of the Baptist Union regarding unemployment. They called for a thorough review of the situation: '...we urge the Christian duty of relieving the necessities of those who are suffering from the lack of employment, and we are grateful to our churches which have given help and particularly to those stronger churches which have taken a special interest, thanks largely to Dr Carlile through the *Baptist Times*, in individual hard-pressed Churches in distressed areas.'

As noted earlier, information on unemployment projects and schemes run by the Baptist Union churches was slow in reaching the media. Thus, it is significant that, in a leader in the *Baptist Times* of 9 January 1939 reviewing the decade, Carlile noted that things had been difficult, but not impossible. Not least had been the Cabinet leadership offered by Ernest Brown.[66] Another writer argued that the State should be responsible for the care of the unemployed, including their maintenance; unemployment insurance was essential.[67] Concerning the churches and the unemployed much was written in 1939.[68] In July 1939 Arthur Porritt again reported and commented on the decrease in unemployment figures.[69] Additionally, Baptists appear to have focussed their concerns upon three geographical areas.

Firstly, the Midlands - 'the Black Country' - received widespread coverage in Baptist debates and reports. For example, Arthur Langley, minister of Wednesbury Baptist Church, writing in the *Baptist Times* on 2 January 1936, made an appeal for help to be given to the poor of the Black Country. He noted that unemployment had risen to 27% in that area. The churches were, however, running schemes for relief - these were not described in detail.[70]

Secondly, and largely through the advocacy of J C Carlile, as has already been noted, Baptists were constantly reminded of the needs of South Wales. On 5 March 1936 a leader by Carlile under the heading, 'The Valley of Heart-break,' recorded a fact-finding visit he had recently paid to South Wales Baptists. He noted that in 1935, 40 churches had shown an increase in membership, 51 had decreased, 23 had recorded no baptisms and 16 still had no pastors. One church in Merthyr provided Sunday dinners for children, the Local Education Authority covering the five school days.[71] This was followed a week later by a feature written by Richard Jones,

described as the 'man on the spot.' He continued the descriptive series on the Rhondda.[72] Responses to these articles were carried under the same banner, 'Valley of Heart-break.'[73]

In April 1936 Emlyn Davies of Merthyr produced a well-reasoned analysis of the industrial problems of South Wales. His 'Gospel for the Unemployed' began by identifying the causes of such acute unemployment. He cited industrial combines and amalgamations, personal enmity between employers and miners' union leaders, rank capitalism and communist propaganda.[74] In a powerful literary style he conceived of God speaking to the Valley dwellers: 'What have you done to my beautiful valleys in South Wales? What have you done with the coal and iron deposits, together with the plenteous water supply I gave you? What have you done with all the wealth of human lives I sent you?' His impassioned plea concluded that this was 'The Agony of God...Shall we leave the field to Mammon? God forbid!' The unrest in the mines in January 1936 had not gone unnoticed by the *Baptist Times*. It had reported on 9 January 1936 that there was general sympathy in the country for the miners. That said, it had to be faced that the industry was losing money.[75] The settlement of the mines dispute was recorded, with the recognition of the National Union of Miners and their pay rise.[76]

In early 1937 Wales was kept in the Baptist eye with an article by Ivor Evans of Blaenau Gwent entitled, 'The Church in Depressed Areas: Yesterday and Today.' He here argued that the plight of such churches: '...differs in no way from that of the Churches in other areas.' Only their circumstances were different. The church must fight free of self-pity and carry on with the task given to it by God.[77]

This was echoed by a letter from R T Evans, Secretary of the Baptist Union of Wales and Monmouth, in response to Ivor Evans' article. R T Evans

made the point also that many churches had a financial debt on their buildings. Much of the debt took the form of loans from miners who were now unemployed.^[78] Indeed, by the year's end an appeal had been launched on behalf of the Baptist Distressed Churches of South Wales and Monmouth. In the 108 churches in the area, a total debt accrued of £77,561. Annual interest alone amounted to more than £3,000.^[79] Carlile again visited the South Wales churches in December 1937 and reported that the situation was still not improving.^[80]

Thirdly, the North of England featured in Baptist social concern for this period - especially from 1935 onwards. On 4 April 1936 the Rev T Stanley Robinson^[81], minister of Carr Road Baptist Church, Nelson, wrote an article for the *Baptist Times* describing the establishment of 'Fellowship in an Industrial Area.'^[82] In particular he focussed upon the problems of the Lancashire cotton industry. In a most thought-provoking way he began to explore the role of the church in industrial communities.

We may summarise, then, that in the field of unemployment the leadership of the Baptist Union gave a strong call for the churches to help in their *local* situations. On the other hand, any attempt to find broader answers to the basic questions posed by the slump is notably absent from Baptist documentation for this period. The *Baptist Times*, similarly, tended to focus on the unemployment situation in the particular localities of the Midlands, the South Wales Valleys and the North of England. Local evidence, meanwhile, would also suggest that there was probably a lot more being done for the unemployed than is indicated simply by an analysis of the *Baptist Times*. At least one church could record in its 1934 report that such work had been well established for four years. The major emphases did not emerge until 1932, when the crisis was at its peak. Indeed, the coverage after 1932 (or more specifically, after the reporting

of the drop in unemployment rate at year end 1932) was drastically increased over that for the previous year. These issues of macro-economic social change posed enormous problems for the Baptist Union leadership, not least because few in their number had any skills in these fields. It has also been suggested, both in this and the previous chapter, that the presence of Christians in and on the fringe of the Cabinet resulted in a certain reticence on the part of Baptist leaders to criticise their political masters.

Yet there was a wide range of social issues on which Baptists still readily found their voices. Much space in the *Baptist Times* was regularly devoted to the, by now, traditional debates about the defence of the Christian Sunday, temperance and gambling. An additional item now firmly on the agenda was that of Sunday cinema.^[83] Significantly, 'traditional' moral issues seemed to find a higher place on the Baptist Union leadership's agenda as the decade wore on. Under the heading 'Moral and Social Questions' the *Annual Report of the Baptist Union for 1935* stated: 'Every age and generation appears to develop its own special expression of Christian love and faith. We note the fact that in these present days a large, and perhaps increasing, proportion of our young men and women feel that for them Christian truth and life have to be worked out both in terms of individual salvation and morality and in courageous thinking and action in regard to social issues.'^[84] A list of evils followed. This included war, unemployment, poverty, bad housing, gambling, drink, loose sexual thinking and action. The report further noted that: 'the challenge to service has come along the lines of national and social redemption.'^[85] Several interdenominational committees, for example, the Christian Social Council, were praised for their efforts to help the unemployed to face up

to their plight and in encouraging the churches to demonstrate their concern in material and spiritual ways. More specifically, however, temperance remained a major concern. The plea was also made that churches: 'consider the value of the Baptist temperance order The Knights of Temperance, which has the advantage of not involving regular meetings but which arranges for young people to be instructed in the need and value of temperance.' [86]

The Baptist Union remained an active member of the Temperance Council of the Christian Churches. At the Annual Assembly in 1935 those present expressed their concern at the high alcohol consumption of the nation as a whole. It was also noted, with concern, that the Government did not appear prepared to control club drinking, and had also allowed extended opening hours. [87] The Baptist position is, perhaps best summed up by S W Hughes, Secretary of the Free Church Federal Council, who delivered an address in which he was quoted as saying: 'As Christians they should enjoy the peace of a quiet conscience in total abstinence.' [88]

Yet, by the mid-thirties, the Baptist response to the temperance issue was generally less strident than it had once been. This may be seen in the style of coverage given in the *Baptist Times*. More emphasis was being placed on presenting facts upon which people were to be encouraged to decide for the temperance position. For example, it was reported that the 1934 mortality figures of the Sceptre Fund of the Eagle Star and British Dominions Insurance Co Ltd had resulted in a 53.47% rate compared to expected rates in the temperance section but 60.49% in the general section. [89]

A more confrontational position continued to be adopted by such as Wilson Black who was President of the UK Alliance and Chairman of the Temperance and Social Questions Committee of the National Free Church

Council. In 1935 he published an article reviewing the temperance issue entitled, 'The Drink Problem: Then and Now.' He concluded by calling for a new initiative against drink.[90] Indeed, that new initiative was to be expressed in the distribution of six million copies of *The Beacon* by temperance groups during the early part of 1935.[91] Response was rapid and, to the abstentionist lobby, encouraging. Wilson Black could write by mid-April: 'It is doubtful whether ever before there has been such a united and simultaneous attack made upon the drink trade...'[92]

Later in 1935 a major article entitled, 'The Church and the Drink Trade,' was carried by the *Baptist Times*. 'Every Baptist a Total Abstainer!' was the call of its author, F E Winterton, Chairman of the Temperance Committee of the Baptist Union. Then, in reflecting upon the year 1935 the *Annual Report* expressed concern that: 'It is regrettable that Bands of Hope do not appear to make the appeal that they did some years ago.'[93] Much of the Baptist support for temperance ideals had, however, already been channelled into the Christian Social Council. Indeed, for many Baptists this had become a substitute for local action.[94]

The continuing strength of Baptist feeling was felt in 1936 when the news leaked that Miss Ishbel MacDonald, daughter of Ramsay, had become a licensee. Shock and horror were the general sentiments.[95] One correspondent later called for a Band of Hope meeting in every Baptist church.[96] Yet by 1937 the *Baptist Union Annual Report* noted serious setbacks for the temperance movement.[97]

Gambling was also still a matter for concern, particularly centring on the football pools. The *Annual Report* for 1935 welcomed the formation of a Special Commission of the Christian Social Council and its resultant

deputation to Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary, urging that football pools be declared illegal.[98] A brief mention was made by the *Baptist Times* of the Betting and Lottery Acts, 1934. No comment was appended.[99] Similarly, towards the end of 1935 the *Baptist Times* expressed its concern at the increased involvement of the public with football pools and other forms of gambling. It noted that the Bishop of Warrington had urged that in their methods of raising money the churches ought to avoid anything which savoured of gambling.[100]

Early in 1936 the *Baptist Times* reported the visit to the Home Secretary of a delegation composed of the Christian Social Council and others opposed to football pools.[101] The Baptist Union Social Service Department put itself firmly behind this campaign, calling for Baptist support of a proposed Bill to outlaw pools.[102] The proposed Bill was discussed a week later,[103] but was subsequently defeated in the House of Commons by 263 votes (24 for the Bill, 287 against).[104] This decision caused the *Baptist Times* to express deep sadness and anger at the lack of courage of MPs. Baptists were also involved in the issue of betting at a more local level. For example, in March 1937, J C Carlile moved a resolution at the Folkestone Education Committee that: 'This Committee notices with profound regret that advertisements relating to football betting pools appear on tickets issued on cars operating in the district and carrying children to and from school.'[105] The resolution was carried unanimously. The betting issue in 1937 was that of the advertising of betting schemes on buses and trains.[106] In the presentation of the 1938 Baptist Union Assembly report on gambling, 'The Menace of Gambling,' the Rev R Guy Ramsay called for preaching against gambling.[107] In the *Baptist Times* for 12 May 1938 F C Spurr produced a full page feature on gambling.[108]

The Union had also co-operated with the Public Morality Council in protesting against undesirable theatre, and had a representative on the Cinema Christian Council under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Canterbury.^[109] Indeed, the *Annual Report* for 1936 makes it clear that most Baptist action in respect of the cinema at this time was channelled through the Cinema Christian Council.^[110]

During the latter half of the decade feeling was rising against the cinemas in general, and their Americanisation in particular. Hastings captures the popular image of the cinemas in the Thirties when he describes them as: 'the populist temple of pleasurable modernity.'^[111] By 1939 there were some 5,000 cinemas in Britain.^[112] The *Baptist Times* for 9 January 1935 carried an article by Sydney Carroll, a film producer, who estimated that 80% of English children had an American accent. The blame for this lay, in his opinion, firmly with the cinemas.^[113] The following week a reporter stated that he understood that a Bill would come before Parliament later in the year which would liberalise the opening of Sunday theatre and variety shows. 491 MPs - three quarters of the House - had declared against this proposal.^[114] The same edition of the *Baptist Times* carried an article reviewing a survey conducted by the Royal Statistical Society. This indicated that in London there was 1 cinema seat per 14 members of the population; in Lancashire 1 cinema seat per 9 members of the population; in the Eastern Counties 1 cinema seat per 19 members of the population; and in South Wales 1 cinema seat per 10 members of the population. Average weekly attendances amounted to 18.5m. In 1934, 957m people paid £40.95m to watch cinema performances. Tax amounting to some £6.8m had been paid to the Government.^[115]

The question of the American influence of the cinema again arose in 1937. Concern was expressed in the *Baptist Times* at the paucity of

British-made films, and that at a time when more than 5,000 cinemas were now open in the country. It was noted that Lord Moyne's committee looking into the state of the industry had again recommended 'quota quickies' as one solution to the problem.[116] Yet, nationally at least, by 1938 a number of Baptists were changing their views on the issue of the cinema. This change is symbolised in an article by Marguerite Williams, published in the *Baptist Times* on 8 September 1938, which dared to claim that the cinema was not essentially evil.[117] Nevertheless, the majority of Baptists during the Thirties felt uneasy about the whole issue of cinema attendance.

On a newer issue, the Public Morality Council also protested at the display and advertising of contraceptives: 'in such a way as to be a direct incentive to immorality...'[118] The *Annual Report* for 1938 called for support for these protests.[119] This debate - along with that concerning the cinema - had been simmering for some time. Abstinence was the usual advice offered by church leaders prior to the 1930s.[120] But the development of the vulcanisation process had made cheap and reliable sheaths possible by 1914. In 1919 the first effective diaphragm was marketed. By the early 1930s some 2 million a year were produced in the United Kingdom, and many more were imported.[121] The softening of the position taken by Protestant churches was evident at the 1930 Lambeth Conference.[122] Indeed, research indicates that yet again the church was pulled forward by society, around 65% of those marrying in the 1930s using birth control at some time.[123]

This chapter has demonstrated that there is a distinct contrast between the response of the Baptist leadership to social issues such as poverty and employment and traditional, personal social-moral issues. Whereas the

Baptist leadership found it prudent not to press beyond generalities in respect of the former, on the latter it proved possible to take a firmer stand. Similarly, whereas Baptist opinion was notably varied in the case of poverty and unemployment, there was little difference of opinion in respect of the 'traditional' issues. Indeed, it may well be that the lack of difference of opinion over the latter was a key factor in Baptists focusing increasingly on these issues in a desire for certainties in an increasingly uncertain world - and confident that such a stand would tend to unite Baptists, whereas a clearer stand on social issues such as poverty and unemployment would equally certainly prove divisive.

Thus in the political uncertainties of the later 1930s, Baptists continued to find it impossible to come to a clear and decisive common mind on the great social issues of their day. In consequence of this they opted increasingly for viewing morality in terms of the safer [sic] issues of personal ethics, viz temperance, gambling, theatre, cinema (both the issue of Sunday opening of cinemas and that of American influence through the cinema) and the apparently newer issue of contraception.[124] Moreover, it may be recalled, such recourse to issues of personal ethics and tacit avoidance of formal commitment on the more controversial social issues of the day was at least accompanied by - and perhaps even a direct result of - a dissolution of the traditional Liberal allegiance of Baptists and its replacement by a combination of increasing confusion as to Baptist political loyalties and *de facto* drift towards greater conservatism.

It is similarly significant that Baptists were also able to take a more united stand over educational issues in the latter half of the 1930s. On the publication of *The Hadow Report* in 1926 the Union Council had

responded with agreement at the proposal to raise the school leaving age to 15 years. The *Annual Report* of the Baptist Union for 1934 noted that the reason for raising the school leaving age was: 'partly for educational reasons and partly in order to meet the evil of unemployment among youth...'[125] This *raison d'être* behind the Bill became a regular discussion point in letters to the *Baptist Times* in 1935.[126] The *Baptist Times*[127] echoed this call, as did the Annual Assembly in May. The Council (along with both the Free Church Federal Council and the National Free Church Council) expressed some concern, however, at the proposals of the report in general. It was also reported on 3 January 1935 that the Anglican Church Assembly had passed a resolution in favour of raising the school leaving age to 15. They agreed that one grievance had been met:

'...that, where the demand exists for religious instruction acceptable to Free Church people it may be provided even in voluntary schools if these receive grants from public funds...' but '...[we] cannot but view with disapproval the decision to make building grants to direct voluntary schools...We still believe that the dual system is wrong educationally, that public grants should not be made without full public control.'[128]

When the proposed 1936 Education Bill was put forward the chief concern of Baptists remained what they perceived to be inequitable State support for denominational schools.[129] When the Bill was introduced to Parliament the *Baptist Times* felt it necessary to carry four major articles discussing it.[130] The Bill actually proposed an agreed syllabus in single-school areas. This was anathema to Roman Catholics. It also proposed reducing grant aid for building in non-provided schools from 75%

to 50% which was not exactly good news to Anglicans. A week later Aubrey also added his considered views.^[131] Opposition to the Bill was quick to manifest itself.^[132] Such opposition, it was reported by the *Baptist Times*, was more pronounced among teachers and representatives of Local Education Authorities.^[133] Indeed, Bebbington rightly argues that the Nonconformist position was strengthened by coinciding with that of the National government and by the reluctance of the government to risk provoking an education controversy like that in the first decade of the century. For these reasons, only limited concessions were made to the Anglicans and Catholics.^[134]

At the 1936 Annual Assembly a spirited debate took place, at the culmination of which a wide-ranging resolution from the Council was passed. This made six basic points. Firstly, the raising of the school-leaving age to 15 years was good, indeed long overdue. Secondly, unease was expressed at exemption clauses by which children might be released from school before the age of 15 years. Thirdly, the introduction of agreed syllabuses in single-school areas was to be commended. Fourthly, it was felt that teachers in non-provided schools should be appointed by the local education authority and not by ecclesiastical bodies. Religious education should be by agreed syllabus. Fifthly, strong disagreement was expressed at the older principle of 75% grants for denominational schools. A better resolution, better even than the grant reduction to 50%, would be a move to total state control. Sixthly, the proposal that the responsibility for maintenance in non-provided schools should remain with their managers was welcomed.^[135]

In the 4 June 1936 edition of the *Baptist Times* it fell to Arthur Porritt to report the passing of the Education Bill, which, in his view: '...settles, by agreement, the great and at times very bitter

denominational controversy that has raged for half a century.'[136] Correspondence to the *Baptist Times* was to continue on this issue for some years.[137] In the debate surrounding education in the latter half of the 1930s Baptists again were on more familiar and firm ground. They remained opposed to the principle of direct voluntary schools. They debated and submitted resolutions on the 1936 Education Bill. They remained strongly in favour of full State control of schools.

This chapter has emphasised that a clear distinction is to be observed between the degree of clarity achieved in Baptist responses to contemporary challenges such as poverty and unemployment, and 'traditional' issues of personal morality and education. There was also a tendency among many Baptist leaders, to view all classes in Britain as enjoying unprecedented prosperity which would have to be foregone for a while as the country tried to fight its way out of recession. Linked to this attitude was the concern expressed by many that the Baptist Churches in general had distanced themselves from 'the people,' by which may be understood the working classes. The best response to social deprivation was seen to be through secular and non-denominational bodies rather than through individual churches, though this was not to deny or discourage good work being done by the churches. While some Baptist leaders did indeed see a need to be involved in the challenge of social change, others - and perhaps the majority - argued for such change simply as a means to prevent the resurgence of socialism. It is equally important to note the frustration felt by many Free Church people that they were no longer strong enough to impose their viewpoint on wider British society, only to ensure a great deal of ill-will, together with psychological separation between their approved social world and that of the national consensus.

There remains one further point to note concerning the marked regional variations in direct Baptist experience of the social and economic crisis of the 1930s.

As Stevenson and Cook argued in their definitive study of the subject, it is a gross distortion of the facts to consider the 1930s as always and everywhere the decade of decline and despair.[138] In the specifically Baptist context too there is a hint of this emerging crisis of economic and social dichotomy in Payne's comments on the period. In a brief allusion to Baptist finances at the time he says: 'The unrest in the ministry...came from a variety of causes. Many churches and ministers were facing increasing financial difficulties. The Missionary Society had year after year to declare a deficit.'[139] This growing financial crisis in some areas of the country has been confirmed in this present study of the years 1930 to 1939. The crisis was most apparent in South Wales where some churches were having difficulty servicing outstanding building loans. At the same time there is evidence of Baptist involvement with the unemployed in such diverse areas as Croydon, Oldham, Wapping, Dundee, the Black Country, and Coventry.

On the other hand, in some areas of the country the mid-1930s saw a Baptist building development on a scale unprecedented since the halcyon days of thirty years previous. Arthur Langley's *Birmingham Baptists: Past and Present*[140] provides ample evidence for such growth in the Birmingham environs. For example, early in the Thirties several hundred pounds were spent repairing the gale-damaged tower of the Church of the Redeemer, Hagley Road. Then in 1936 a little caretaker's house was added at a cost of £500. Later in the decade flood-lighting was installed. This meant that 'the exterior of the sanctuary has revealed its beauties.[141] The City Road Baptist Church had erected new church hall and primary departments in

1923 at a cost of £4,600. By the late 1930s a further building scheme was afoot with an estimated cost of £7,000 to £8,000.[142] Significant building work also took place at: Acock's Green, Barnt Green, Billesley, Hall Green, Harborne, Londonderry, Longbridge, Newbridge, Northfield, Small Heath, Stechford, Sutton Coldfield and Yardley Wood Baptist churches.[143] The same phenomenon can be observed in such prosperous Essex towns as Romford where the Baptist church was growing in numbers throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s. A new church building was erected, being opened on 6 September 1934. The total cost of the project was in the region of £8,000. This was followed a year later with the launching of a second building project. This cost a further £3,500.[144] A similar pattern also pertained in many parts of London where an estimated 25% or more of the churches had major building projects in hand.[145] This phenomenon is also referred to elsewhere in this thesis in the context of local church studies.

Taken together with earlier comments on unemployment, these specifically Baptist findings not only confirm the general evidence for a distinct focusing of the unemployment problem in the traditional heavy industrial areas, but also suggest that the Baptist denomination itself was in all probability marked by a significant regional perception of the seriousness of the problems attendant upon unemployment and recession. This also may account for the lack of a unified stance within the denomination on these issues.

Footnotes to Chapter 5:

1. *Baptist Times*, 1/1/31 p 1.
2. *Baptist Times*, 1/1/31 p 17.
3. *Baptist Times*, 1/1/31 p 10.
4. *Baptist Times*, 12/2/31 p 109.
5. *Baptist Times*, 4/2/32 pp 69f.
6. *Baptist Times*, 12/5/32 p 329.
7. *Baptist Times*, 20/10/32 pp 723, 727.

8. *Baptist Times*, 27/10/32 p 741.
9. *Baptist Times*, 3/11/32 p 755.
10. *Baptist Times*, 22/12/32 pp 903, 909.
11. *Baptist Times*, 14/7/32 p 486.
12. *Baptist Times*, 18/8/32 p 575; 8/9/32 p 618.
13. *Baptist Times*, 22/9/32 p 648.
14. *Baptist Times*, 2/10/32 p 727.
15. *Baptist Times*, 28/7/32 p 521.
16. *Baptist Times*, 13/10/32 p 703.
17. *Baptist Times*, 20/10/32 p 719.
18. *Baptist Times*, 17/11/32 p 793.
19. *Baptist Times*, 4/8/32 p 541. For comment on the nature of slum dwelling in this period, see: Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, pp 138ff, 220ff.
20. *Baptist Times*, 5/1/33 p 3.
21. See for example, *Baptist Times*, 19/1/33 p 39.
22. *Baptist Times*, 2/11/33 p 745.
23. *Annual Report: 1931*, p 17.
24. *Baptist Times*, 23/2/33 p 129.
25. *Baptist Times*, 1/5/33 p 325.
26. *Baptist Times*, 1/5/33 p 302.
27. *Annual Report: 1933*, p 17.
28. *Baptist Union Presidential and Other Addresses: 1931-1933*, 1933, passim.
29. *ibid*, p 8.
30. *ibid*, pp 9f.
31. *ibid*, pp 22f.
32. *ibid*, pp 23f.
33. *Baptist Times*, 26/10/33 p 729.
34. *Annual Report: 1933*, p 7
35. *Annual Report: 1934*, pp 10f.
36. *ibid*, pp 11f.
37. *ibid*, pp 12 to 15.
38. *Baptist Times*, 14/3/35 p 140.
39. *Baptist Times*, 5/7/34 p 483. See the later comments on Beulah Baptist Church, Oldham.
40. *Baptist Times*, 4/1/34 p 4. See also: B P Jones, *Sowing Beside all Waters: The Baptist Heritage of Gwent* (Cardiff, 1985), passim, but especially Chapter 17, 'Gwent Baptist Churches in the Days of Crisis (1920/45),' pp 314ff.
41. *Baptist Times*, 4/1/34 p 7.
42. This family tradition has been continued in P R Clifford's *Politics and the Christian Vision* (London, 1984).
43. *Baptist Times*, 16/5/35 p 381. See also the Baptist Union Council Report, 'The Churches and Unemployment' which was the basis for the Assembly debate (*Baptist Times*, 19/3/36 p 216).
44. *Baptist Times*, 11/7/35 p 515.
45. *Baptist Times*, 26/11/36 p 907.
46. *Baptist Times*, 22/10/36 p 801 and 29/10/36 p 821.
47. *Baptist Times*, 10/8/39 p 620.
48. *Baptist Times*, 30/7/36 p 591.
49. *Baptist Times*, 4/6/36 p 483.
50. *Baptist Times*, 30/7/36 p 593.
51. *Baptist Times*, 6/8/36 pp 604f.
52. *Baptist Times*, 27/8/36 p 652.
53. *Baptist Times*, 10/9/36 pp 689, 691.
54. *Baptist Times*, 26/11/36 p 904.

55. *Baptist Times*, 14/1/37 p 27.
56. *Baptist Times*, 28/1/37 p 65. See also: *Baptist Times*, 4/2/37 p 85.
57. See, for example: *Baptist Times*, 11/3/37 p 187.
58. *Baptist Times*, 18/3/37 p 207.
59. *Baptist Times*, 18/2/37 p 127.
60. *Baptist Times*, 25/2/37 p 145.
61. *Baptist Times*, 22/4/37 p 310.
62. *Baptist Times*, 6/1/38 pp 3ff.
63. *Baptist Times*, 13/1/38 p 31.
64. *Baptist Times*, 20/1/38 p 44.
65. *Annual Report: 1938*, p 20.
66. *Baptist Times*, 9/2/39 pp 101f.
67. *Baptist Times*, 23/3/39 p 229.
68. See, for example, *Baptist Times*, 6/4/39 p 269; 8/6/39 p 448; 20/7/39 p 566.
69. *Baptist Times*, 6/7/39 p 527.
70. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/36 p 4.
71. *Baptist Times*, 5/3/36 pp 173f.
72. *Baptist Times*, 12/3/36 p 191.
73. *Baptist Times*, 19/3/36 p 213.
74. *Baptist Times*, 9/4/36 p 274.
75. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/36 p 27.
76. *Baptist Times*, 30/1/36 p 87.
77. *Baptist Times*, 25/2/37 p 146.
78. *Baptist Times*, 18/3/37 p 204.
79. *Baptist Times*, 10/12/37 p 972.
80. *Baptist Times*, 6/1/38 p 1.
81. *Baptist Times*, 4/6/36 p 487.
82. *Baptist Times*, 8/10/36 p 763.
83. cf Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp 209ff. The state of the debate over Sunday opening of cinemas is well detailed in a *Times* leader on 14 March 1931 [*The Times*, 14/3/31 p 13].
84. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 32.
85. *ibid.*
86. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 31. See also: *Baptist Times*, 7/11/35 p 815.
87. *Baptist Times*, 16/5/35 p 381.
88. *Baptist Times*, 9/5/35 p 354.
89. *Baptist Times*, 31/1/35 p 95.
90. *Baptist Times*, 3/1/35 p 6. See also *Baptist Times*, 11/4/35 p 275.
91. *Baptist Times*, 21/3/35 p 221.
92. *Baptist Times*, 18/4/35 p 296.
93. *Annual Report: 1935*, pp 30f.
94. *ibid*, p 32.
95. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/36 p 27.
96. *Baptist Times*, 2/7/36 p 512.
97. *Annual Report: 1937*, pp 25ff.
98. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 33. cf Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, pp 384ff.
99. *Baptist Times*, 4/7/35 p 500.
100. *Baptist Times*, 21/11/35 p 851.
101. *Baptist Times*, 6/2/36 p 98.
102. *Baptist Times*, 27/2/35 p 161.
103. *Baptist Times*, 5/3/36 p 175.
104. *Baptist Times*, 9/4/36 p 275.
105. *Baptist Times*, 25/3/37 p 225.
106. *Baptist Times*, 18/3/37 p 213.
107. *Baptist Times*, 5/5/38 p 343.

108. *Baptist Times*, 12/5/38 p 370.
109. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 33.
110. *Annual Report: 1936*, p 18.
111. Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp 244f.
112. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, pp 395ff.
113. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/36 p 27.
114. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/36 p 42.
115. *Baptist Times*, 16/1/36 p 44.
116. *Baptist Times*, 29/4/37 p 327.
117. *Baptist Times*, 8/9/38 p 689.
118. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 33.
119. *Annual Report: 1938*, p 19.
120. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, p 151.
121. *ibid*, p 153.
122. *ibid*, pp 155f.
123. *ibid*, p 150.
124. On this latter issue see: Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, pp 218ff, 373, 384. Angus McLaren also presents a detailed critique of the church's position on contraception in his *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1990). Possibly his most pertinent comment in this present context is that: 'Late nineteenth century women...feared that male forms of contraception, associated as they were with prostitution, would increase immorality.' [p 195]
125. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 13. On this whole debate, cf: Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, Cap 14, 'Another Look at Education,' pp 204ff.
126. See, for example, *Baptist Times*, 10/1/35 p 31.
127. *Baptist Times*, 16/5/35 p 381. See also: *Annual Report: 1935*, p 13,
128. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 13.
129. *Baptist Times*, 13/2/36 p 123.
130. *Baptist Times*, 20/2/36 p 139.
131. *Baptist Times*, 27/2/36 p 155.
132. *Baptist Times*, 27/2/36 p 159.
133. *Baptist Times*, 5/3/36 p 177.
134. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 89.
135. *Baptist Times*, 26/3/35 p 230. See also: *Baptist Times*, 19/3/36 p 216; 14/5/36 p 375; and *Annual Report: 1936*, pp 36ff.
136. *Baptist Times*, 4/6/36 p 435.
137. See, for example: *Baptist Times*, 9/6/38 p 444; 16/6/38 p 463; 23/6/38 p 484; 25/8/38 p 652; 24/11/38 p 884; 1/12/38 p 904; 23/2/39 p 144.
138. Stevenson & Cook, *The Slump*, *passim*.
139. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 202.
140. A S Langley, *Birmingham Baptists: Past and Present* (London, 1939).
141. *ibid*, p 93.
142. *ibid*, p 97.
143. *ibid*, pp 70, 188, 81, 112ff, 122, 196, 141, 148f, 154f, 165, 171, 206, 1
144. K D Duffin, *Fifty Years On: Romford Baptist Church 50th Anniversary, Main Road 1934-84* (Romford, Private Publication, 1984), pp 20 to 41.
145. cf, for example: J Willmott, *Sunshine and Shadows: A Century of Baptist Witness in Hounslow, Middlesex* (London, 1949), and the many local church histories cited in the previous chapter, especially, *They Built in Faith*, *The Church on the Hill*, *Carshalton Beeches Baptist Free Church*, *A Century of Christian Witness*, *The Opening and Dedication of the New Church Hall*, *Leaves from Memory Lane*.

CHAPTER 6

Major Themes: 1931 to 1939

War and peace^[1]

For Britain, the 1920s had been years blissfully free from the fear of war. General revulsion at the events of the previous decade felt by so many was reinforced with the publication of war poems and realistic war novels and journals.^[2] Additionally, the League of Nations was seen as a great force for peace. In this climate of apparent international harmony, pacifism found a soil in which to prosper. There was also increasing concern that the Versailles Treaty had been unjust to Germany and that some generosity to the defeated foe would be recipricated by even deeper pledges of peaceful co-operation in the future.^[3]

The early 1930s in fact saw a deepening of interest amongst Baptists in issues relating to world peace. Yet, as will be demonstrated below, the Baptist Union position on this issue was to change with remarkable rapidity. In 1931 the Baptist Union Council: '...were also strongly represented on the deputation of the Churches to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to express our conviction that Disarmament was a moral and religious issue to which Britain should give a strong lead.'^[4] Yet two years later a Welsh Baptist Union, frustrated with its co-religionists east of Offa's Dyke, passed a pacifist resolution and urged the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland to do the same, arguing that: 'Britain should give a strong lead.'^[5]

In the light of this resolution Ceadel's argument that, nationally, a crisis for pacifism came in 1932 with Hitler's rise to power appears the

more pertinent.[6] Indeed, he goes so far as to describe this as a 'watershed.' Hitler was perceived by many as but one symptom of a world-wide revival in militarism.[7] His ascendancy meant that many moral and political questions had to be faced squarely. Not least, a choice had to be made between pacifism and pacificism.[8] So rapid was the change in public thinking that by 1933, for example, the No More War Movement was in dramatic decline, and the Labour Party had committed itself to internationalism at the expense of pacifism.[9]

Others would argue that the turning point came in 1933 with the 9 February Oxford Union debate: 'that this House will, in no circumstances, fight for its King and Country.'[10] Right-wing leader-writers exploited this motion as soft, decadent and disloyal to the war dead, thus making it more difficult to hold to a studied pacifism without embarrassment. Wilkinson argues that pacifists also had 'a belief in the rationality and reasonableness of human beings which in the churches was reinforced by liberal theology.'[11] This might lead one to conjecture that the Baptist Union's emphasis on evangelism in the early 1930s was a reflection of a growing theological conservatism. Linked to that conservatism would be the concomitant stress on the fallen nature of man and its allied distrust of human nature - ideas which had always sat uneasily with pacifism.

By 1934 the official position of the Baptist Union had become one of studied neutrality. Aware of the divergent views within the denomination the *Annual Report* for that year, under the title, 'The Baptist Attitude to Peace and War,' remonstrated that: '...the question of the participation of the Christian man in war has raised sharply a discussion as to the will of Christ and of God's way of dealing with wrong. In the freedom which is the cherished heritage of Baptists we find seemingly irreconcilable views...We have convinced pacifists who do not believe that under any

circumstances the use of armed force against evil can be justified, and we have those who believe, and in some cases paid a heavy price for their convictions, that Christian men, with power of action given to them by Christ, must not and dare not stand aside when values more sacred than life itself are threatened.'[12] This indecision was echoed in the National Free Church Council Congress of that year at which the delegates were unable to commit themselves for or against either pacifism or re-armament.[13]

There were a number of strands to the war debate during the latter half of the 1930s, each of which requires exploration before an accurate overview can be achieved. The elements of the debate passed remorselessly from the abstract to the concrete as the threat of European dictatorship gave way to its actual expansion. For Baptists, two major debates served to focus further the war debate in early 1935, namely a *Baptist Times* article by T R Glover under the title, 'Pacifism in the pulpit' and the national debate on the perceived evils of air power. Published in Christmas week 1934, Glover's article[14] argued for a balanced view of pacifism such that the idealism upon which it was based did not lead to political and moral naivete. In other words, he argued for the pacificism which some scholars suggest was already well accepted by the early 1930s. Ceadel helpfully notes that pacificism was a blend of nineteenth century optimism and twentieth century pessimism.[15] This description must, of course, be held alongside Ceadel's own admission that pacificism was already a factor in the Boer War debates.[16] Reaction to Glover's feature was strong, the ensuing debate continuing for several months. In the 3 January 1935 edition of the *Baptist Times*, for example, one correspondent, writing in support of Glover, argued that the police and the military each have the same role of maintaining order, albeit in different spheres.[17]

In stark contrast, a letter in the same edition from the Baptist Ministers' Pacifist Fellowship, was stinging critical of Dr Glover for failing to adopt a fully pacifist line of argument.[18] An editorial comment on page 5 to the effect that numerous letters and a full twelve articles had so far been received was a portent of the debate to come.[19] That pacificism should have taken root in British thought by the 1930s should come as no surprise if Ceadel's analysis is correct: 'The flowering of *pacifism* in Britain, and also in the United States, was an integral part of its liberal, protestant, political culture.'

A week later, the *Baptist Times* began publishing letters on this debate in profusion. The first correspondent took issue with the assertion that the police and the military simply have the same role in different spheres.[21] He was joined by such a worthy as the Rev Leyton Richards the Congregational leader.[22] A week later Ingli James of Queen's Road, Coventry, and the Wesleyan J Scott Lidgett, long-time warden of the Bermondsey Settlement, had articles published. Lidgett's was entitled, 'The Christian Religion and the Exercise of Force.' He did not cite Glover, but dealt with the very points which Glover had raised.[23] Many letters appeared in the weeks that followed.[24] Two further articles were printed, viz 'Pacifism and Dr Glover' (by one F E Pollard of Reading), and 'Isaiah in the Pulpit - a reply to Dr Glover' (by the Rev Percy H Jones of Banyston, Devon).[25] A review article was also carried in the 14 March 1935 edition.[26] In response to this debate, the Annual Assembly simply resolved that: '...war is contrary to the will of God...excessive nationalism with its danger should be resisted.'

It is important to realise that any call for pacifism from Baptists was not just an emotional response. For example, when the learned Congregational leader Dr J D Jones wrote an article for the *Baptist Times*,

'Peacemaking Among the Nations,' he expressed the feeling that: 'There seems to me an urgent need in these days for the Christian's witness in favour of peace. For we are living in a time marked by the recrudescence of militarism.' [28] He went on to express deep disappointment that war remained a possibility. In the responses to his article it is clear that he was capturing the feeling of many Baptists. Another example of such a reasoned approach is contained in an article published on 25 April 1935 by Paul Rowntree Clifford, who had led the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship group at Regent's Park College in the early 1930s. The article, entitled, 'The Christian Attitude towards Armed Force,' was essentially a plea for Christian pacifism, setting in juxtaposition the contrasting phrases, 'Take a sword,' and 'Follow me.' He went on to write: 'To be a pacifist is not to hold a negative position. It is to love...The Communist and the Fascist follow their leaders and trust them. Why do not we follow Christ?' [29] A month after Clifford's article 21 students from Bristol Baptist College wrote to the *Baptist Times*: 'We, the undersigned, believing that war is contrary to the will and purpose of Christ, declare that we will not participate in any future war, and pledge ourselves to oppose war by every possible means ...Believing this, we feel it our duty as future ministers of the Church to make our position public.' [30]

Something of ordinary national opinion can also be gauged from the result of the Peace Ballot. Announced in July 1935 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, there were some 12 million responses. 10 million of these voted for an all-round reduction in arms and 6 million voted for military sanctions against aggressor powers. The *Baptist Times* and the Archbishop shared this position. [31] Pacificism had finally arrived. [32]

At a national political level this changing attitude had already been reflected in MacDonald's announcement in the spring of 1935 that arms

spending was to be increased. Whilst many Baptists were shocked by this action, the *Baptist Times* leader of 7 March quoted MacDonald as arguing that: 'They [Germany] cannot fail to recognise that not only the forces but the spirit in which the population, and especially the youth, of the country are organised, lend colour to, and substantiate, the general feeling of insecurity that has been incontestably general.' In turn, Carlile remarked: 'We are entirely with MacDonald...It may be - we hope it will be - that Mr MacDonald's emphatic statement will call a halt to preparations for war which are now being made by practically all Governments.'^[33] The Baptist Union Council, however, passed a unanimous resolution, with 'great strength of feeling shown,' expressing 'very strongly the trouble in their minds and hearts as a result of the prospect of a movement towards increased armaments for this country being embarked upon.'^[34] M E Aubrey agreed to convey the feelings of the Council to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. Another writer in the 14 June *Baptist Times* also regretted the £10.5m increase of the Forces Estimates to a record £124m. He argued that the government should have waited for the time being.^[35] Strength of feeling eventually resulted in a united written protest being conveyed to the government from the Congregational Union and the Baptist Union.

As has been indicated above, the battle was still not fully won for pacificism. Other Free Church people were also not content to take a neutral line on militarism. In early 1935 Wigan Methodists had resolved against: 'the grave situation which has arisen in consequence of the military, naval and air plans of His Majesty's Government.' MacDonald was not easily cowed, writing in reply: '...The British democracy has...a right to be told the true position, and the Government would be false to the great responsibility entrusted to them if they failed to adopt the

precautionary steps that they are now taking. These steps are regarded as a service to peace by many countries, and as a menace by none.'[36]

Significantly, the pure pacifist position began to weaken still further in the wake of Hitler's rejection of the Versailles Settlement despite earlier misgivings at the Settlement felt within the denomination. Thus, when the Naval Estimates for 1935 showed an increase of £3.5m the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, defended them on the grounds that they were the result of an updating programme, not overall increases. The *Baptist Times* responded: 'On the whole it seems to us that the First Lord made out a strong case...it was seen that the increase in the Estimates did not mean an increase in armaments. If we were justified in having any armaments at all, it could hardly be wrong to keep them in a state of efficiency.'[37]

A further focusing of the peace debate had also arisen from an article published in the *Baptist Times* on 17 January 1935. Here Dr Garvie writing under the auspices of The Friends of Europe considered his subject under the title of 'Confessions: The Religious Conflict in Germany'; it served to confirm the suspicions of many ordinary Baptists. Garvie wrote:

'The reality is that the Church is being subjected in its organisation to the control of the State, that the people are being coerced into acquiescence in the policy of the State, that the leadership of the Church cannot claim even that measure of support which the leadership of the State can claim, and is using means to assert itself which may be similar to those of the State but which are contrary to the "freedom of the christian man" which Luther so boldly asserted.'[38]

This concern about church machinations then flowed over into concern at German prevarication in regard to the Anglo-German Air Pact. It had been hoped that Germany would become involved in the discussions and agreements.^[39] The final, delayed German communique provoked the response from the *Baptist Times*: 'The note is a clever one, both in its form and in its implications...The worst thing about Germany's air fleet at present is the secrecy which surrounds it and the uncertainty as to its size and the purpose for which it is being created,'^[40] This added dimension to the peace debate was taken further by George Lansbury in what the *Baptist Times* called his 'finest speech.' Lansbury appealed to the government to make every effort to save civilisation by securing an agreement to abolish aerial warfare. Great Britain, he argued, should take a lead. The *Baptist Times* responded: 'On previous occasions we have made reservations; now we ought to withdraw all reservations and be prepared to abandon aerial warfare for any reason whatever or in any part of the world.'^[41]

On 30 May 1935 the *Baptist Times* favourably reported that there was now hope of an Air Pact. Sir Herbert Samuel had suggested limiting each nation to a maximum of 500 aircraft.^[42] Then, hard on the heels of the air power negotiations it was announced that discussions were well under way on an Anglo-German Naval Agreement. A *Baptist Times* editorial announced itself in favour of any such agreement on the pragmatic ground that it would be better for Germany to have one third the English force than have no limitation to size.^[43] A week later it was reported that the Naval Agreement had been concluded. Germany had agreed to limit its navy to 35% of the British tonnage. Submarines were to be outside the main agreement, and Germany was to be permitted equal terms in this respect. In return Germany pledged itself to procuring a submarine fleet totalling no more than 45% of British submarine tonnage unless it be by prior consultation.

The reason for such leniency in regard to submarines was stated to be the clearly defensive nature of submarine warfare. Such was the state of British naval tactics in the Thirties.^[44] The agreement was criticised by other Western governments. On this issue of negotiations over submarines, an interesting dispute erupted a week later when Lloyd George accused the government of having turned down a German proposal for the complete abolition of submarines. The First Lord of the Admiralty denied that the Germans had ever expressed a desire for this - a statement which the Germans themselves confirmed. In fact, France had been the key opponent of the abolition of submarine capabilities during the Naval Conference of 1935. France, Japan and Italy: 'All...regard it as the most powerful defensive weapon of the weaker naval Power.'^[45]

Jordan is surely correct, then, in his conclusion that by the end of 1935 the majority of Free Churchmen had accepted the need for re-armament, but few were prepared to express that in so many words. He is also of the opinion that by this time there was a strong and clear move towards pacificism on the part of most Free Church denominational leaderships.^[46] Indeed, Hastings goes further to suggest that pacificism was strongly represented in the Free Churches well before the Thirties. He finds it particularly significant that the Fellowship of Reconciliation, founded in December 1914, had always tended towards pacificism, being committed to seek peace by all possible means. He considers true pacifism to have been far less widespread than popular imagery would allow.^[47] In his view the watershed lay as early as 1931, with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. This position is shared by Ceadel.^[48] It will be argued in the next chapter of this thesis that this position is, indeed, correct.

A further dimension to the debate was introduced in May 1936 with Lloyd George's eccentric attempt to place the blame for war on the churches.

This attack was probably in part launched out of anger that many churchmen had failed to support his Council of Action. J C Carlile, in blistering counter-attack, argued that the root cause of war was economic: 'That being the case, which set of politics should the churches follow?' asked Carlile. 'We have great regard for Mr Lloyd George and would be glad to see him leading the Liberal Party to power, but we are not to remain silent when the Christian Church is made the scapegoat for futile political leadership. The Church's work is still to preach the Gospel, knowing that changed characters will change conditions.' [49]

This sense of growing frustration at the failure of politicians to secure lasting peace agreements was taken up by Carlile in a leader on 10 September 1936. He posed the question, 'Is the world going mad?' Spain was facing civil war, the Abyssinian crisis had become a disgrace, Germany was persecuting the Jews, in the Holy Land Jews and Arabs were in conflict, in Russia Stalin was again engaged in a purge, Mexico was facing an anti-church movement. 'A determined effort is being made by the Dictators,' he asserted, 'to break the power of the Christian communities...' To make matters worse, 'The Church is languishing for bold leadership.' [50] Ceadel argues that, in fact, 1936 saw the final polarisation of attitudes of supporters of the peace movement. During this year socialist pacifism was virtually destroyed, although Christian pacifism held up somewhat better. [51] Certainly, in the Baptist context, this is substantially correct.

On 1 October 1936 the *Baptist Times* recorded the Free Church Federal Council's discussion on peace policy for the churches, [52] and three weeks later the *Baptist Times* again declared itself in favour of an International Police Force. [53] This suggestion was echoed repeatedly during the latter half of the 1930s. The Rt Hon Lord Davies called for

such an International Police Force and a World Tribunal in his *Baptist Times* article, 'From Anarchy to Power.'^[54] Also, one D V Wallace, in a letter the next month, called for an International Police Force and the resuscitation of the Disarmament Conference.^[55]

In 1933 the Baptist Union Assembly had set up a committee under the chairmanship of Ernest Brown MP (later succeeded by J H Rushbrooke) to consider *The Attitude of the Baptist Denomination to War*. The final report of this committee was appended to the 1936 *Annual Report*.^[56] It concluded that in the ideal world there would be a world-federation of States and that these states should be viewed as inter-dependent and not sovereign. The committee stated that the majority of its members considered that: '...[the] Pacifist view does not reckon with the actual situation.'^[57] They also expressed '...our deprecation of the practice of signing anti-militaristic pledges.'^[58] Whilst being prepared to urge the surrender of a measure of national sovereignty in order to secure an effective world peace organisation it admitted to having reservations with 'the contention - endorsed by the majority of the committee - that a peaceful world cannot be ensured apart from force organized in such form and on such scale as to be equal to the task of restraining disloyal and aggressive States.'^[59]

The Baptist Ministers' [Peace] Pacifist Fellowship felt deeply aggrieved by this report. Founded in 1929 - initially as a group for ministers - the fellowship took a rigidly pacifist position.^[60] In response to the Baptist Union document the Fellowship published a pamphlet entitled *The Baptist Pacifist Fellowship in relation to the Report of the Baptist Union on War*^[61] Here it was argued that the report's advocacy of collective security, including military sanctions, was totally indefensible on Christian grounds. The military outrages of Spain, China and the Great War were offered as proof of the essential evil of military methods. It was

considered unconscionable for Christians to be involved in such activities. The only viable way towards peace was for the British government to call for an international conference designed to deal with the causes of international tensions. An International Police [the word 'Force' was omitted] should also be established.

At this point a major rift opened up in the Baptist denomination. Predominantly pacifist churches threatened their resignation from the Baptist Union over its attitude to war. Aubrey took this threat seriously, writing in the *Baptist Times* of 15 April 1937: 'One might almost conclude, from the way in which some of these friends write, that they have not a good case and must occasionally make up in denunciation what they cannot supply in reason.'^[62] Then in July, J C Carlile, ever prepared to enter into debate, produced a leader, 'They did not die in vain.' In this he called for less arms spending, and the need for Christian people and nations to trust to God's help at all times.^[63]

The depth of concern at the enormous destructive potential of aerial warfare was also vented on the British government in the light of the RAF's bombing in Waziristan on the North West Frontier in late 1937. Arthur Porritt, in the *Baptist Times*, wrote: 'Aerial warfare is devilry let loose, and is repugnant to most civilised minds.'^[64]

With the international situation deteriorating the various denominations again returned to the debate on 'The Christian Attitude towards War' in February 1937. The Church Assembly led the way, but the *Baptist Times* leader that followed indicated an unhappiness at the inadequacy of the debate, Carlile writing: 'Would it not have been better to have made a frank confession of inability to solve the problem from the Christian point of view?...The outlook as I see it is appalling.'^[65] In this same edition, however, Porritt deplored Chamberlain's announced £400m spending

on arms just days after the latter had, himself, deplored the 'lunacy' of arms expenditure all over Europe. To Porritt's mind the matter could have been handled better if the expenditure had been presented as a defence of the League of Nations' status.[66] This sentiment was echoed at the Baptist Union Council the next month with the resolution: 'That this Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland views with the deepest concern the re-armament of the world in which the British Government has felt compelled to take so prominent a part.' It further called on His Majesty's government to reaffirm its adherence to the League of Nations.[67] To reinforce this point the *Baptist Times* carried an article on 1 April 1937 indicating that: 'in the face of the unemployment and appalling poverty in most of the countries [of Europe]' 20% of the British budget, 29.7% of the French budget, 50.7% of the Italian budget and 46.6% of the budget of Japan was being spent on arms in 1937.[68]

Such was the general decline in pacifism in the second half of the 1930s that Wilkinson points out that at the beginning of the war, enrolled Christian pacifists numbered 15,000 at the most.[69] Despite this decline the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship issued a broad and bold statement as war loomed in the early part of 1939. It declared that to be part of the military machine was contrary to Christian conscience. Whilst the military may need Free Church chaplains, they should be careful not to become part of the military system itself.[70] By 1940 the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship was little more than a rump, mustering only 62 members to its annual meeting.

This chapter has indicated that during the 1930s Baptists were by no means united in their views on issues of war and peace. As the decade began, there remained a fond attachment to the ideals of pacifism. Yet

those ideals were no longer easy to maintain. Free Church support for the Great War had undermined much pacifist confidence. Indeed, it may legitimately be asked just how solidly pacifistic the broad body of Free Church people had ever been. It can be argued that much myth creation has accrued to Free Church sympathies with pacifism. What is clear, however, is that as early as 1932 the Baptist leadership - and substantial numbers of 'ordinary' church members - were moving to a solidly pacificistic position. War remained an evil to their minds, yet it might sometimes be a necessary evil. The Chinese invasion of Manchuria, with all its implications for Western missionary aspirations was the catalyst for change. Hitler's coming to power in 1932 speeded up the reaction, the militaristic growth of Germany (and the oppression of some elements of the German Church), and the rise of other dictatorships served to break the will of pure pacifism still further. The field was then clear for pacificism to become the normative moral stance on issues of war and peace.

Footnotes to Chapter 6:

1. For a concise review of twentieth century Baptist thinking on this issue see: P R Dekar, 'Twentieth century British Baptist Conscientious Objectors,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1993, XXXV:1, pp 35ff.
2. See Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* p 86. cf K Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The 'Peace Movement' in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff, 1976), passim.
3. This is further discussed by Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?*, pp 125 to 136. See also: Keith Clements, 'A Question of Freedom? British Baptists and the German Church Struggle,' in *Baptists in the Twentieth Century*, pp 96 to 114.
4. *Annual Report: 1931*, p 22.
5. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 85.
6. M Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford, 1980), pp 115ff, 120, 122ff.
7. *ibid*, p 125. These wider issues are discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis.
8. A J P Taylor defined this term in his *The Trouble Makers* (London, 1957), p 51n.
9. Ceadel, *Pacifism*, pp 169ff.
10. Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?*, p 92. cf Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p 127.
11. Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?*, p 95. cf Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p 163.

12. *Annual Report: 1934*, pp 13ff.
13. Payne, *James Henry Rushbrooke*, pp 59ff.
14. *Baptist Times*, 20/12/34.
15. Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p 6.
16. *ibid*, p 27.
17. *Baptist Times*, 3/1/35 p 4.
18. *ibid*.
19. *ibid*, p 5.
20. Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p 24.
21. *Baptist Times*, 10/1/35 p 28.
22. *ibid*, p 32.
23. *Baptist Times*, 17/1/35 p 35.
24. See, for example, *Baptist Times*, 17/1/35 p 48, 24/1/35 p 68, 31/1/35 p 88, 7/2/35 p 108, 14/2/35 p 128, 21/2/35 p 148, 28/2/35 p 168.
25. *Baptist Times*, 24/1/35 p 73.
26. *Baptist Times*, 14/3/35 p 206.
27. *Baptist Times*, 16/5/35 p 381.
28. *Baptist Times*, 7/3/35 p 182.
29. *Baptist Times*, 25/4/35 p 312.
30. *Baptist Times*, 23/5/35 p 392.
31. *Baptist Times*, 4/7/35 p 499. See also: R Jenkins, *Baldwin* (London, 1987), pp 136 ff; Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?*, pp 120f; Ceadel, *Pacifism*, pp 1, 147, 156, 171, 178, 234.
32. cf Ceadel, *Pacifism*, pp 132ff.
33. *Baptist Times*, 7/3/35 p 187.
34. *Baptist Times*, 14/3/35 p 199.
35. *Baptist Times*, 14/3/35 p 203.
36. *Baptist Times*, 4/4/35 p 259.
37. *Baptist Times*, 21/3/35 p 223.
38. *Baptist Times*, 17/1/35 p 47.
39. *Baptist Times*, 14/2/35 p 131.
40. *Baptist Times*, 21/2/35 p 151.
41. *Baptist Times*, 28/3/35 p 243.
42. *Baptist Times*, 30/5/35 p 411.
43. *Baptist Times*, 20/6/35 p 459.
44. *Baptist Times*, 27/6/35 p 479.
45. *Baptist Times*, 11/7/35 p 519.
46. Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, pp 183f. cf his Cap 12, 'Search for peace,' pp 180ff.
47. Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp 330f.
48. Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p 124.
49. *Baptist Times*, 21/5/36 pp 389f.
50. *Baptist Times*, 10/9/36 p 689. See also Gwilym Davies' articles: *Baptist Times*, 10/9/36 p 683; 31/12/36 p 1020. Davies and his role in the Welsh branch of the League of Nations Union is dealt with by Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p 174.
51. Ceadel, *Pacifism*, pp 193ff, 204ff, 207ff.
52. *Baptist Times*, 1/10/36 p 738.
53. *Baptist Times*, 22/10/36 p 801.
54. *Baptist Times*, 7/1/37 p 11.
55. *Baptist Times*, 11/2/37 p 104.
56. *Annual Report: 1936*, pp 59ff.
57. *ibid*, p 72.
58. *ibid*, p 81.
59. Cited in Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p 207. See also Bebbington, 'Baptists and Politics,' p 84.
60. Membership was extended to all members and adherents of Baptist

churches in 1936. Of the 2,300 ministers initially contacted in 1929 by the founder, W H Haden, 64 declared themselves pacifists and more than 300 intimated a desire for a peace movement. [*Minutes of the Council of the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship*, passim. The records of the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship are deposited at the Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.]

61. *The Baptist Pacifist Fellowship in relation to the Report of the Baptist Union on War* (nd). cf *Baptist Times*, 13/5/37 p 373. On the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship, see: Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p 174.
62. *Baptist Times*, 15/4/37 p 283. See also the *Baptist Times* letters of 22/4/37 p 304; 13/5/37 p 364, (which included letters from such worthies as Richard Glover, Charles Becket and J H Rushbrooke.); 20/5/37 p 384; 27/5/37 p 404.
63. *Baptist Times*, 11/7/37 pp 544f.
64. *Baptist Times*, 11/11/37 p 851.
65. *Baptist Times*, 18/2/37 pp 121f.
66. *Baptist Times*, 18/2/37 p 127.
67. *Baptist Times*, 18/3/37 pp 202, 208.
68. *Baptist Times*, 1/4/37 p 242.
69. *ibid*, p 236.
70. *Council Minutes of the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship*, 13/2/39.

CHAPTER 7

Major Themes: 1931 to 1939

Baptist Concerns on International Politics

Baptists in the 1930s had a continuing and generally well-informed interest in international politics. In the present context, however, constraints of space preclude little more than a brief outline of the major issues.

The Rise of Hitler and the German Church Struggle

During the opening years of the decade Baptist opinion-formers were relatively silent regarding developments in Germany. That said, Chapter 6 of this thesis has demonstrated that deep concern was felt at Hitler's rise to the chancellorship. However, concern over Germany's intentions grew most rapidly in the five years 1935 to 1939. For Baptists, as for many others, the final turning point in their thinking on issues of war and peace came with Hitler's momentous decision to denounce the military clauses of the Versailles Agreement and to return to conscription. In its wake the *Baptist Times* called for a calmness amongst Christian people.^[1] Concern was expressed by Carlile at this time over the dangers of war-mindedness.^[2] Aubrey also sought to wrestle with the wider implications of Germany's action,^[3] and, along with other writers in the denominational journal, sought to commend Hitler for any apparent magnanimity in his foreign policy.^[4] Yet Gwilym Davies, Welsh Secretary of the League of Nations, argued that: 'What we are witnessing is a

titanic struggle...And the decisive word may be with Britain and the British people.'[5] As the year progressed Davies found no reason to change this viewpoint,[6] and J C Carlile echoed these sentiments by describing 1935 as a 'year of fear.'[7]

Soon the *Baptist Times* was reporting first the publication of Army Orders in Germany in January 1936,[8] and then Hitler's repudiation of the Locarno Treaty as German soldiers entered the demilitarised area of the Rhineland.[9] A further incisive critic on international affairs was the feature writer, Arthur Porritt, editor of *The Christian World*. In July 1936 he expressed concern at the German-Austrian Treaty, viewing this as the creation of a 'Nazi-Fascist band dividing Europe.'[10]

Porritt again showed a clear understanding of international politics when he opened 1937 with the statement that: 'It will be found, I think, during 1937 that Germany's demand for colonies will be the dominating issue in international politics and the issue upon which the peace of Europe may be poised.'[11] By year end the mood had settled into one of resignation and apprehension.[12] Porritt, in his review of 1937, stated that all seemed unstable - the security of the throne, Europe and the Far East, and the fear of war.[13] This was echoed by Gwilym Davies: 'These are tempestuous, troubled years. Standing on the threshold of 1938, let us honestly ask ourselves what are Christians for but to be at their best when things are at their worst.'[14]

The next event of importance in Germany reported by the *Baptist Times* was the purge of the Army chiefs in February 1938. This 'stealthy blow at the power of the Army chiefs in Germany' - to cite Arthur Porritt's news article - left Hitler as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Minister of War.[15] This move was swiftly followed by the virtual adding of Austria to the Reich. Again Porritt was forced to comment: '[Hitler]

has dropped his mask. Faith in his word is shaken...France and Britain are pledged to maintain Austrian integrity, but the fear of war has once again obviated war.'[16] The following week the *Baptist Times* reported gloomily, that: 'This week has been a good week for dictators; one of the best they ever had.'[17] Two weeks later the full annexation of Austria took place and was duly commented on by Porritt, who saw the Austrian leadership as ripe for such a take-over, being 'Fascist, Catholic and dictatorial'. He considered this the 'gravest crisis for 24 years.'[18] Linked to these crises was a growing Baptist mistrust of Chamberlain,[19] and an ever-louder call to reconsider the role of Winston Churchill.[20]

As the nation began to prepare for war the *Baptist Times* felt it right to give a lead, not least in encouraging churches to offer their premises for air raid precaution purposes. The *Baptist Times* for 7 April 1938 suggested that this was the duty of all, even pacifist churches, for the purpose was clearly humanitarian.[21] Not all agreed with this suggestion as the *Baptist Times* letters columns for the period indicate.[22]

It was again Porritt who noted Hitler's secret talks with Mussolini in early May 1938,[23] On 28 July 1938 Carlile produced a searching leader for the *Baptist Times*, entitled, 'Kept in Perfect Peace.' Written in the context of the continuing rise of the dictators it reflected the deep anguish permeating the whole nation at the time, not least Baptists.[24] In September 1938 another leader from the pen of Carlile struck a far more pessimistic note. He was now convinced that the old spirit of war-mindedness was once more rearing its ugly head.[25]

At this point Chamberlain regained some popularity with Baptist opinion-formers following his meeting with Hitler at Berchtesgarden.[26] Amidst such speculation Carlile presented a leader, 'The Next Step: Peace or War?' in which it was pointed out that: 'Not all the arguments are in

favour of Czechoslovakia.' It was clear to Baptists that the denominational organ could still be persuaded of the rightness of compromise if it bought peace for the nation.[27]

In the light of the crisis there was an increasing concern that the Baptist Union leadership should give some specific direction to the churches as to how they should react. With the 'triumph' of Munich even Porritt turned to praise Chamberlain. He felt that Europe was turning over a new leaf.[28] Others were not so easily swayed, however. In the letters columns of the *Baptist Times* for 13 October, G E Lee of Streatham posed the question, 'What Cause for Thanksgiving?' He went on: 'Peace cannot be founded on injustice. At Munich third party judgement was brushed aside, collective action was abandoned, and brute force triumphed.' He broadened his attack on Chamberlain by stating: 'The whole trend of Mr Chamberlain's policy has been to appease the Dictators by the sacrifice of the weaker nations.' He concluded by detailing the ramifications of the Czechoslovakian concessions as he saw them.[29] These concerns were shared by the ever-authoritative Gwilym Davies, who expressed disgust at the exclusion of Czechoslovakia from deciding its own fate.[30] By the following week Porritt had reassessed the value of Munich. Now he also expressed himself unhappy with the implications for Czechoslovakia.[31] S W Hughes, J H Rushbrooke and M E Aubrey added their voices to those of leaders of both Anglican and Nonconformist denominations in a letter to *The Times* on 31 October 1938.[32] Here the plea remained that of diligence, prayer and trust in God in the midst of the crisis.

Armistice ceremonies were distinctly muted in 1938, the *Baptist Times* leader asking forlornly, 'Was their Sacrifice Useless?'[33] Arthur Porritt went so far as to suggest that: 'This Armistice Commemoration, it seems to me, has lost its original thrill and ought to be abandoned...now

everything for which the Great War was fought and won...has gone by the board.'[34] On the other hand, with the prospect of war looming large on the horizon the Robert Hall Society - a Baptist organisation at Cambridge University - debated the 'Baptist Attitude to War.' As at the Oxford Union, the debate was won handsomely by the pacifists.[35]

As events unfolded in Europe, the *Baptist Times* duly noted Hitler's speech before the Reichstag in February 1939 in which he emphasised that 'Germany must export or die.'[36] Soon the German invasion and annexation of Czechoslovakia was being noted.[37] Porritt argued, in the light of this, that Hitler was seeking to work out that policy described in *Mein Kampf* whereby Germany would obtain European dominance.[38] The implementation of National Service was reported by Porritt on 4 May.[39] A week later the *Baptist Times* printed the text of the Conscription Bill.[40] On 11 May it was again Porritt who predicted that Hitler's next concern would be the establishment of a Dantzig Free State.[41] For the *Baptist Times*, the rest of August was marked by a series of leaders and articles with grim, foreboding titles.[42] Immediately following the declaration of war the *Baptist Times* leader declared that: 'All parties and sects are united with his Majesty's government.'[43] In the weeks that followed, the churches were encouraged to consider a vast range of practicalities.[44] On 5 October 1939 Porritt reported sadly that Poland had fallen in flames.[45] Not surprisingly, the rejection of the Prime Minister's war aims by Lloyd George and the Council of Action evoked a sharp attack from Carlile.[46] As the year drew to a close, Porritt expressed concern at Stalin's seizure of Finland. He also commented on the 'Nazi-Soviet pact without which Hitler would not have risked war.'[47]

Having briefly considered the events leading to the outbreak of the Second World War, the manner in which Baptist perceptions of German nationalism were conditioned by their understanding of and reaction to the so-called German Church Struggle must now be considered.[48] From the early summer of 1933 Baptist concern for their co-religionists in Germany increased. Undoubtedly, this was a concomitant to Hitler's appointment to the chancellorship in January 1933. Clements identifies five strands to the struggle for Church freedom in Germany as perceived by writers in the *Baptist Times*. Firstly, there was a campaign to unite the various Evangelical churches of Germany into a single Reich Church and a campaign by the fanatically nationalist "German Christians" to introduce a racial basis into the church. Secondly, the German state used heavy-handed, coercive measures to try and force the Evangelical Church to conform to its wishes. Thirdly, there was resistance to the coercive methods, a questioning of the legality of many of the authoritarian methods of Reichbishop Müller, and protests by increasing numbers of pastors. Fourthly, the actual dismissal (albeit temporary) of some protesting pastors such as Martin Niemöller of Dahlem, Berlin, brought the issue to a crisis. Finally, the Barmen Synod at the end of 1934, adopted what became the famous Barmen Confession as the true credal basis of the German Evangelical Church, with its massive affirmation of Jesus Christ as the one Word of God to be obeyed in life and death, and its forthright rejection of the claims of other powers and beings for lordship over the Church.[49]

Clements has demonstrated that British Baptists had been involved in debate over the state of religion in Germany since the early 1930s. Their support for the German church was first evoked in a major way when Reichbishop Müller found himself at odds with the Nazi leadership in

March 1935. A week later sympathy was expressed by the *Baptist Times* for the 1,200 expelled professors and teachers who had been deprived of their posts by the Nazis.[50] It was also noted with profound regret that Karl Barth had been removed from his university chair.[51] Additionally, there was coverage of the Confessing churches' recently published manifesto.[52] By April 1935, the *Baptist Times* was coming to the reluctant conclusion that: 'All hope of an agreed settlement of the conflict between the German Christians and the Confessing Churches has now disappeared.'[53] In this same edition, the *Baptist Times*, reported that Ludendorff, the leader of the German anti-Christian movement, had argued that the future success of the German people depended upon the banishment of the Christian religion.[54] Next, grave concern was expressed at the German Religion Easter Jugendweihe - dedication of youth. This was the first public occasion on which the blue banner and the golden sun-wheel of the German Faith was seen alongside the flag of the Third Reich.[55] A week later, it was reported that 15,000 mainly young people had listened to Count Reventlow and Prof Hauer, the 'apostles of neo-paganism.'[56]

The *Baptist Times* also reported Hitler's promise in the summer of 1935 to place some checks on neo-pagans and their anti-Christian propaganda. This report was skilfully juxtaposed with the statement of the German Catholic bishops that: 'We do not fear for our Church, but we are uneasy about our Fatherland.'[57] A month later, 17 October 1935, the *Baptist Times* announced Karl Barth's arrest and expulsion from Germany.[58] Although not being totally convinced of the rightness of Barth's theological position on some points, Aubrey had no doubts about the rightness of his political stance.[59] As the year drew to a close the *Baptist Times* concluded that 'Affairs seem to be coming to a crisis in the German Church dispute.'[60]

Little reference was made in the *Baptist Times* to the German church struggle in 1936 beyond general news reporting.^[61] 1937 was quite different, however. On 7 January Arthur Porritt made his assessment in the *Baptist Times* that the German Church Struggle was again coming to the fore. It would be, in his view, a major issue in 1937.^[62] He continued on this line in March, writing of the 'heroic resistance of the German Evangelicals against the paganisation of the Christian Church.'^[63] It is also clear that pressure had been exerted by German Confessing Church leaders on their British Baptist counterparts not to agitate too strongly for them at this point in time. Aubrey's correspondence with Mrs Buxton makes this very clear.^[64] In April 1937 Aubrey led a delegation to the German Ambassador to London at the request of the Provisional Administrator of the Confessing Church.^[65]

The debate deepened in July as a result of comments made by Dr Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester denying that the new wave of arrests in Germany was religious persecution. Arthur Cayley Headlam was a political right-winger to whom the idea of firm government appealed greatly. In fact, Headlam was advised by the Rev Dr A J Macdonald, Rector of St Dunstan-in-the-West. Wilkinson argues that both were cultivated by Nazi agents.^[66] In the bishop's view the difficulties faced by the Church in Germany were of a political nature only.^[67] Aubrey regarded the bishop's position as appalling.^[68] The following week Aubrey commented forcefully on the arrest of Pastor Niemöller: 'It appears at times as if the Nazi state is emulating the Soviet government which it affects to despise in its methods, sometimes subtle but always ruthless, of injuring the Christian faith.'^[69] Porritt also reported that the Nazi repression had extended to the theological colleges being closed and Church newspapers being suppressed. Aubrey again expressed deep concern on this issue in the 22

July edition of the *Baptist Times*.^[70] In the same edition the 'Table Talk' columnist - probably Alfred Shakespeare - highlighted what was to Baptists a crucial principle, that the Reich Minister had established finance departments in the Protestant churches. This meant that the Reich: '...may regulate in particular the employment and maintenance expenses of employees of the central Church authorities, of the clergy, and of officials and employees of local congregations.'^[71] Niemöller really had struck a chord in Baptist hearts. He was readily and warmly quoted.^[72] In October Porritt reported further that the Confessing Church divinity colleges had been dissolved.^[73]

On 3 February 1938 the *Baptist Times* informed its readership that Pastor Niemöller was now on trial, the trial beginning on 7 February. It was held in secret which probably accounts for the confusion in dates exhibited by the *Baptist Times*. It also called for prayer for all German Christians, and aligned itself fully with them.^[74] As news emerged of Niemöller's acquittal of 'underhand attacks on the State and the Party' it was tempered by his conviction for 'violating a Bismarckian law forbidding clergymen to discuss the affairs of State in public in a way to endanger the public peace.' He was also found guilty of violating an emergency decree designed to repress communists. His sentence was to be one of 'protective arrest' in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, 15 miles from Berlin.^[75] Significantly at this point, some German Baptists were opposed to the position of the British Baptist Union vis-a-vis the German Church Struggle.^[76] Their statement in the *Baptist Times* led to fiery debate in the letters columns of the journal.^[77] By September 1938 Pastor Niemöller's condition was causing increasing concern amongst British Baptists. It was reported by the *Baptist Times* that he was suffering from 'intestinal catarrh.'^[78] The final report for the period

in question was in the *Baptist Times* of 29 June 1939. It noted that on 1 July Niemöller would have been imprisoned for two full years.[79]

The Abyssinian crisis

Although Mussolini had come to power in October 1922, it was again 1935 that saw an increase in concern amongst British Baptists over his intentions. By July of that year, the Abyssinian crisis was worrying Baptist opinion formers intensely. On 11 July the *Baptist Times* commented: 'The dispute between Italy and Abyssinia is fast becoming a world problem instead of a mere frontier incident.'[80] By 8 August 1935 the compiler of the 'Notes of the Week' was becoming deeply concerned about the nature of the 'sort of agreement' which had been reached.[81] In this same edition, however, concern was expressed that: 'A section of the Press...is resorting to war-mongering of the worst type' in the context of Abyssinia.[82] A week later the Notes reported that there appeared to be no change in the crisis.[83]

The weeks of the early autumn saw considerable and intelligent debate in the pages of the *Baptist Times*. [84] However, some of the discussion simply degenerated into anti-Catholicism.[85] On 5 September it was made abundantly clear that the *Baptist Times* could not be happy with unilateral British action against Italy over Abyssinia,[86] and the next week, Aubrey wrote a profound and searching article in which he explored the implications for Britain of various scenarios.[87]

The 1935 League of Nations meetings were reported in full by the *Baptist Times*. It was clear to the *Baptist Times* that Mussolini was determined to thwart the League.[88] The strength of Baptist anger at such cavalier behaviour was made patent in a cynical article by Gwilym Davies.[89] On

the 19 September the *Baptist Times* carried a second article by Davies, 'The British Stand at Geneva.' This time he argued that Italy was becoming more and more isolated.^[90] The outbreak of war in Abyssinia was noted with horror by the *Baptist Times* on 10 October 1935.^[91] It further reported, on 17 October, that Italy was attempting to justify its actions in Abyssinia by claiming them to be a mission of civilisation and protection.^[92] The journal would have none of this, and its stand soon earned it the disapprobation of the Italian authorities.^[93]

By February 1936 the *Baptist Times* was bemoaning the manner in which the Abyssinian crisis was dragging on.^[94] This hiatus continued well into the spring of 1936.^[95] Its impact on Britain became apparent when an 8m supplementary estimate for the forces budget was announced. The *Baptist Times* commented that this was chiefly the result of the Abyssinian war: 'Dictators are very expensive luxuries to the nations where they rule.'^[96] This was followed by the announcement of Cabinet estimates of the Rearmament Budget for 1936 placed at 300m. 'If we are to aid in keeping the peace,' asserted the *Baptist Times*, 'we must provide our quota of force of some sort.'^[97]

By March 1936 the *Baptist Times* - ever aware of the reality of international affairs - was posing the question, 'Will Mussolini call a halt?' The writer went on to argue that it was to be expected that Italy would demand the annexation of the areas it had occupied and the cessation of sanctions.^[98] The development which actually struck Baptists next was far more horrifying than any they had imagined. Italy, it was reported on 2 April, had used poison gas in Abyssinia.^[99] The crisis was further compounded by the flight of the Emperor to Palestine in late April 1936.^[100] Carlile was now ready for another departure into the field of political comment, and on 16 July the *Baptist Times* carried a leader,

'Abyssinia and After.' Carlile asked: 'Is there not a general feeling of uneasiness about Abyssinia?' He pondered the options for Britain and argued that British ineffectiveness amounted to moral failure on her part. His greatest scorn was, however, reserved for the Roman Catholic press in Britain: 'The Roman Catholic papers, especially "The Tablet," in this country represent the war as "a missionary enterprise." To me the announcement is blasphemy.'^[101] Then in late summer further protests were voiced over the recognition by the League of Nations of Italian sovereignty in Abyssinia. Noting the protests of Lord Cecil and Prof Gilbert Murray, Arthur Porritt recorded cynically: 'I expect that we shall find once again that the League Council never touches anything that it does not adjourn.'^[102]

The Baptist Union *Annual Report* for 1938 gave a graphic overview of the problems caused by the dictators under the title, 'The State of the World.' It argued that: 'We cannot hide from ourselves the fact that, in by far the greater part of Europe, Christianity as we have received it looks like being extinguished.'^[103] It went on to call for prayer and service for peace, the revival of Christian faith and life, and a resting in the sovereignty of God.

'The Spanish Blood-Bath'^[104]

The first mention of the Spanish Civil War occurred in the *Baptist Times* edition of 30 July 1936.^[105] This report was followed, two weeks later, by a stinging article by Arthur Porritt.^[106] Surprisingly, considering its ineffectiveness in the Abyssinian crisis, he called for League of Nations intervention.^[107] Porritt was acutely aware of the German link in the likely Fascist victory in Spain. He saw little hope for democracy in

Spain if the German pattern was to be followed.[108] Support for the Republicans amongst Baptists was by no means universal, however, at least one *Baptist Times* writer seeking to present sympathetically the Fascist reasons for the fighting in Spain.[109]

Regular news updates continued in the *Baptist Times* until the end of 1936.[110] Then, as 1937 began, Baptist concern deepened. This was the result of confirmed news reaching Britain of German and Italian involvement in the civil war.[111] This concern was taken still further with the news that bombs of German origin and aircraft of three German types had been involved at Guernica.[112] Later in 1937, the *Baptist Times* was able to state categorically that Hitler and Mussolini were overtly supporting Franco, as had been suspected for some time.[113] As with the Abyssinian conflict, the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the civil war was brought into issue by Baptists.[114] With the bombing of Barcelona in March 1938 Porritt again expressed 'horror and disgust' at the Falangist actions. This was compounded by reports that aircraft, believed to be Messer-Schmidts, had been used.[115] Porritt clearly saw the three European Fascist dictators as being in collusion at this point in time. It is not surprising, therefore, that on 30 June 1938 he attacked Chamberlain for the weakness of his 'Parliamentary stock' in the light of his not defending British ships off Spain. We are 'not mice,' he affirmed.[116] Also in the summer of 1938, J H Rushbrooke expressed deep concern for Protestant Christians in Spain. He was particularly concerned to reflect his co-religionists' despair at the close alliance between the Roman Catholic hierarchy and General Franco's regime.[117]

When Barcelona fell, in January 1939, with the virtual defeat of the Republican government, Porritt was quick to enquire whether Mussolini's forces would now leave Spain.[118] The *Baptist Times'* final word on Spain

prior to the outbreak of the Second World War came in a leader from J C Carlile's pen entitled, 'When is Christianity non-Christian?' It developed into a blistering attack on Falangist jingoism in general and on Franco in particular.[119]

Japanese Expansion

In May 1937 the fourth great expansionist state, Japan, began its invasion of China. To Baptists this was another war close to home, not least because of the long tradition of Baptist and faith mission missionary service in China. The first report of the fighting, in the *Baptist Times* of 15 July 1937, noted that there was fighting near Peking, but it was felt that China was probably able to defend herself.[120] Two weeks later it was reported that the Sino-Japanese war was in full flood: Japanese methods were similar to those used in her annexation of Manchuria in January 1931.[121] Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, it was that invasion which had first alerted Baptist leaders to the dangers posed by expansionist powers. In late August, Porritt was the first to make the Fascist link. Under the banner, 'The Horrors of Shanghai,' he asserted that: 'Virtually this is a Fascist revolution...' Two more provinces had been annexed. British interests in China amounted to a capital investment of approximately 180m. Additionally, there were still many British and American missionaries in the country.[122] The following week Porritt again wrote of the seriousness of the situation in the Far East.[123] The Baptist Union had sent fruitless representations to both the Japanese and German ambassadors.[124] The *Baptist Times'* coverage of the conflict during 1937 ended with the disastrous news that, as with Shanghai, so now Peking and Nanking had fallen.[125]

The story for 1938 unfolded with remorseless agony. Readers of the *Baptist Times* were informed in February that Japan was now 'rampant' in the Far East.[126] This was followed by a review article by E A Payne in which he discussed the implications of the conflict for the Baptist Missionary Society and for the Chinese church in general.[127] By mid-March it was reported that Japanese troops had reached the banks of the Yellow River,[128] and in June, Japanese air-raids on Canton and other 'barbarities' had confirmed the worst fears of Baptists as to the nature of modern warfare.[129] At this point, mid-summer 1938, the situation in the Far East was eclipsed by that in Europe. Apart from occasional news updates, little was mentioned in the *Baptist Times* until 22 June 1939. On this occasion Arthur Porritt discussed the 'chronic crisis in China.' There seemed little hope of any easing of the warfare.[130]

Eastern European Baptists[131]

The deep sympathy for Baptists in Eastern Europe - particularly in Russia - noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis continued into the second half of the decade. From early in the 1920s the British public came to perceive socialist Russia as violent and atheistic.[132] By way of positive response to this situation, grants were made from British Baptist sources to train ministers in Czecho-Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.[133] The Baptist Union *Annual Report* for 1935 gave an update on the situation for Baptists in Russia[134] and in Latvia.[135] It described advances in Lithuania[136] and recorded the opening of a new church and seminary in Riga.[137] Dr Rushbrooke also reported that Baptists in the republic of Estonia had been freed from state interference.[138] This stream of news reports was the major Eastern European focus for Baptists throughout the

1930s. Indeed, these reports fit into several categories. Firstly, news was recorded of the training of Eastern European pastors in England.[139] Secondly, concern was expressed at state interference with Romanian Baptist churches. In a four-page *Baptist Times* feature on 24 October 1935 on Baptist work on the continent of Europe it is particularly interesting to note the report of advances in Romania.[140] However, news was also reaching England that the Romanian police were beginning to increase their repression of Baptists.[141] For some months the position remained critical.[142] At this point Baptist leaders stepped up their campaign on behalf of their co-religionists. The Baptist World Alliance appealed to King Carol for his intervention.[143] Baptist writers began direct political attacks on the Romanian leadership,[144] and by the end of March 1939 their campaign had succeeded - in part, at least. Romanian Baptists were allowed the practice of baptism and communion, weddings and funerals. The *Baptist Times* was astounded: 'It is difficult to interpret this action....'[145] Still better news followed: churches were allowed to reopen.[146] The *Baptist Times* also discussed Baptist involvement in social work in Eastern Europe.[147] The main source of information was the 'Continental Quarterly' insert in the *Baptist Times*.

Finally, mention must be made of the reaction of M E Aubrey to the government's attempts in early 1939 to forge closer ties with Eastern European states. The government clearly felt it necessary to try and wean Russia in particular away from German influence. Aubrey would have none of this logic, writing to Lord Halifax on 4 April: '...I am sure the new turn in the Government policy is viewed with dismay by a large number of earnest Christian people. These pledges to, and agreements with, countries in which bitter religious persecution is going on - Russia, Poland and Rumania - seem to us to be making terms with tyranny.'[148]

India: the Early Days of Dominion Status

As indicated earlier in this thesis, the *Baptist Times* remained firmly committed to the principle of allowing to India full dominion status. As the British government White Paper proposals for India became public in late 1934 the *Baptist Times* reacted by expressing concern that this was the one point on which the British government was not prepared to make concessions.^[149] The *Baptist Times* also reported that Attlee (then Opposition Leader) had described the White Paper as 'a big advance.' Yet he, too, argued that full dominion status was needed. The Aga Khan had also added his voice to these calls.^[150] At the end of January 1935 the *Baptist Times* published details of the Government of India Bill. Again it voiced deep concern at the absence of reference to dominion status.^[151] The passage of the Bill on first reading was faithfully recorded by the denominational organ. It was noted that the Bill had a hard passage, facing opposition from both the political Left and Right.^[152] Then a jarring note was struck by the *Baptist Times* with the news that: 'A report in the UP [United Press] states that Mahatma Gandhi's eldest son, Hirala Gandhi, has become a Christian and has made a public announcement of the fact. His father has ostracised him as a result of his conversion to Christianity. In the light of this statement, what are we to think of Mahatma Gandhi's long and eloquent advocacy of liberty?'^[153]

A year later Arthur Porritt reported in the *Baptist Times* for 4 March 1937 that the first Indian General Election had passed without serious incidents.^[154] Within a month, however, he was forced to report that, although administrations had been formed in all eleven Provinces, the Congress Party had pledged to make them unworkable.^[155] Less than two

years later the Congress had attained power and Porritt was speaking of Gandhi as a peacemaker.[156]

It has been demonstrated, then, that for British Baptists mid-decade was a crucial point in their thinking on international issues. Indeed, 1935 marked the precise point at which they were forced to accept that international affairs were bad and getting rapidly worse. In the German context considerable unease was expressed from 1932 onwards with the rise Hitler, yet, although they had earlier argued for the repealing of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty, when Hitler actually did this in March 1935 they were largely horrified. There was also concern to scotch war-mindedness in the denomination. Yet, as was demonstrated in Chapter 6 of this thesis, by this point in time the leadership of the Baptist Union had ceased to be avowedly pacifist. Indeed, all the evidence suggests that the vast majority of the denomination's leadership were pacificistic. They may well have come to that position in large part as a result of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Hastings sees that event as a general watershed for the pacifistic/pacificistic amalgam.[157] The damage done to missionary work in Manchuria may well have brought home the threat of Japan and the ineffectiveness of absolute pacifism in a manner in which no debating society could achieve. This move to pacificism had a profound effect on the presentation of news and views within the denominational journal. Without the premise that war is always and ever wrong the various writers could range widely in their critique of German affairs and in presenting suggestive responses for the British government.

This point having been made, it is also apparent that by the end of 1936 confusion had taken hold. Against the back-drop of the constant hope that war could be avoided fear was expressed as to the real aims which Hitler

had in mind. Yet such worthies as J C Carlile still argued that: 'changed characters will change lives,' and the Union secretary, M E Aubrey was clear as to the inevitable outcome for the great dictators:

'The self-confidence of totalitarian states and their apparent success, in contrast to the fears, hesitations and divisions of democracies, are bringing into question the value of a faith which asserts that to God, and to God alone, belong man's first homage and loyalty...This faith of ours is the spiritual basis of human liberty...Tyrannies have a way of collapsing through inherent instability.' [158]

National and international affairs were still being evaluated against a solidly evangelical world-view.

The last three years of the decade were marked by increasing resignation to the inevitability of war. Hitler's purge of the army chiefs and the annexation of Austria were viewed with deep seriousness. Yet, as for the nation as a whole, for some while a pragmatic view of German expansion prevailed: '...so long as it brings peace to Britain.' This point is illustrated by the manner in which the peace talks and undertakings made at Munich were welcomed. Indeed, increasing mistrust of Chamberlain, apparent among Baptists prior to Munich, was changed to pleasure after that visit. By the end of 1938, however, with the Czechoslovakian crisis, appeasement was seen as a false hope and 1939 opened with the leaders of the Baptist Union preparing the churches for war. By Easter the tone was deeply pessimistic, the *Baptist Times* seeing it as its responsibility to remind its readers that citizenship creates responsibility.

The degree of movement in Baptist thinking on pacificism is illustrated

by the manner in which, when war eventually broke out, the *Baptist Times* was quick to stress that it was a just war, to save humanity from Hitlerism. Baptists could engage in this war with a clear conscience - just as their forebears had done in 1914. War was to be understood as a consequence of human sin, and as such, war-makers were to be resisted.

Additionally, the public concern of British Baptists for their co-religionists in Germany dated back to the first half of the decade, to 1933 to be precise. Once again, an increase in interest can be discerned in the spring of 1935. Of especial concern was the prominence given to the German Religion among the young. The leadership of the British Baptist Union consistently understood and presented this philosophy as a nationalistic cult of blood and race. Events in the German churches found their focus in the arrest, trial and imprisonment of Pastor Niemöller. To some extent the developments in the German Church Struggle confirmed the already-prevailing concerns of many Baptists about Hitler's long-term intentions. It is also important to note, however, that in its reporting of the struggle the *Baptist Times* inevitably influenced, indeed, conditioned the world-view of many within the denomination. Whether this was incidental or intentional is a matter of interest which lies beyond the scope of this current work.

Not surprisingly, the concern at the rise of the German dictatorship felt by the leaders of the Baptist denomination was extended to the other three dictatorships of that time. In the case of Italy this concern was expressed as early as 1935. As the situation in Abyssinia worsened the *Baptist Times* moved to an overtly anti-Italian position. This was linked to a latent and long-standing mistrust of the Vatican and Roman Catholicism in general. Baptist opinion-formers were quick to make the link between Italian Fascist ambitions and Catholic religious imperialism.

Significantly, it was in the light of the Abyssinian crisis that the *Baptist Times* began actively to support and even promote British re-armament. As has already been argued, an ideological move from pacifism to pacificism had paved the way for such a marked change of stance. Yet, despite concern about Italian ambitions arising first chronologically, as early as 1936 some writers for the *Baptist Times* had already perceived Germany as the greater danger.

Concern was also expressed by Baptists over the war in Spain. Again, however, of greater concern was the involvement of Germany and Italy. The Spanish Fascists, as such, were seen as a secondary problem. Perceived Vatican complicity again led Baptists to attack the Pope for his weakness in international affairs.

The invasion of China by imperial Japan had also caused deep concern to British Baptists. To the general concern felt for China as a nation was added fear for the safety of the many Western missionaries in China and for British capital investment in the mainland. Indeed, this concern actually predates the full-blown invasion of China and can be first observed around the time of the invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Many Baptists would also have remembered the Boxer rebellion in China at the turn of the century with the attendant loss of life among Western missionaries and Chinese Christians. However, these points made, it is clear that by mid-1938 attention was drawn away from the Far East to the rapidly worsening situation in Europe.

In this increasingly volatile, and hence, pragmatic climate both Lansbury's socialism and Dick Sheppard's 'other-worldliness' fell on increasingly deaf ears. The League of Nations was seen as an abject failure. Concern at the prevarication of the League turned to horror with its recognition in 1936 of Italian sovereignty in those parts of Abyssinia

which it had already subjugated. The one great international force for peace - as many Baptists saw it - had been shown to be, finally and irretrievably impotent when it was most needed.

It is clear also that by the mid-Thirties the religious and political problems of Eastern Europe were rapidly being eclipsed by those in the West. Possibly, the increasing rapport between Hitler and Stalin served to destroy much innate sympathy felt for Russia by Free Churchmen in general. Certainly, so far as the official and semi-official Baptist documents studied in this present work are concerned, what expressed sympathy there was for Baptists in Eastern Europe tended to be focused on Romania in particular.

Finally, Baptist thinking on Indian issues in general, and Gandhi in particular, was mixed - even muddled. What is clear, though, is that British Baptists were in favour of dominion status being granted to the sub-continent. As in so many other international issues, the religious dimension obtruded, with considerable debate ensuing about the religious presuppositions of such Indian leaders as Gandhi. It seemed quite impossible for Baptists in the 1930s to view any particular issue, whether national or international, as merely political in nature. The religious dimension was never far away. Again, as in the cases of Eastern Europe and China, by the late-1930s concern over events in Western Europe had eclipsed wider, traditional international concerns.

It may also be argued, however, that vested interest is discernible in these stances. It might, indeed, be argued that they were the product of capitalist/colonialist aspirations. Based on the various sources noted above, however, and taking full account of their context, it may be concluded that positions were generally taken on the basis of 'What would be best for Protestant Christianity in that country?' To that extent, at

least, Baptist thinking and speaking on these issues may be said to have exhibited a certain underlying consistency.

Footnotes to Chapter 7:

1. *Baptist Times*, 21/3/35 p 223. For an analysis of the pros and cons of the Versailles agreement see: Hastings, *English Christianity*, p 24.
2. *Baptist Times*, 21/3/35 p 227. cf *Baptist Times*, 28/3/35 p 245.
3. *Baptist Times*, 21/3/35 p 219.
4. cf for example: *Baptist Times*, 30/5/35 p 411; 6/6/35 p 427.
5. *Baptist Times*, 25/4/35 p 315.
6. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/36 p 2.
7. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/36 p 7.
8. *Baptist Times*, 6/2/36 p 103.
9. *Baptist Times*, 12/3/36 p 195. See also J C Carlile's comments on this development, *Baptist Times*, 19/3/36 p 215; 9/4/36 p 275. cf Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp 165f.
10. *Baptist Times*, 16/7/36 p 555.
11. *Baptist Times*, 7/1/37 p 7.
12. See, for example: *Baptist Times*, 30/12/37 p 1007.
13. *Baptist Times*, 30/12/37 p 1011.
14. *Baptist Times*, 6/1/38 p 2.
15. *Baptist Times*, 17/2/38 p 127.
16. *Baptist Times*, 24/2/38 p 147.
17. *Baptist Times*, 3/3/38 p 167.
18. *Baptist Times*, 17/3/38 p 207. See also: *Baptist Times*, 24/3/38 p 227. For further contemporary Baptist reflections on the motives of the dictators, see: *Baptist Times*, 21/4/38 p 307; 21/4/38 p 307. See also: Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* p 170.
19. cf *Baptist Times*, 31/3/38 p 244.
20. *Baptist Times*, 24/3/38 p 227.
21. *Baptist Times*, 7/4/38 p 265.
22. See, for example, *Baptist Times*, 14/4/38 p 284; 21/4/38 p 304; 2/6/38 p 424; 9/6/38 p 444; 23/6/38 p 484; 30/6/38 p 504; 14/7/38 p 544; 28/7/38 p 584. 12/5/38 pp 363f.
23. *Baptist Times*, 5/5/38 p 347. cf *Baptist Times*, 12/5/38 p 367.
24. *Baptist Times*, 28/7/38 p 581.
25. *Baptist Times*, 15/9/38 pp 697f.
26. *Baptist Times*, 22/9/38 p 719. See also, *Baptist Times* leader for 6/10/38 pp 745f.
27. *Baptist Times*, 29/9/38 p 729. cf *Baptist Times*, 29/9/38 p 731; 29/9/38 p 735.
28. *Baptist Times*, 6/10/38 p 751. See also: *Baptist Times*, 13/10/38 p 767; 13/10/38 p 770; Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* pp 171 to 189.
29. *Baptist Times*, 13/10/38 p 764.
30. *Baptist Times*, 13/10/38 p 768.
31. *Baptist Times*, 20/10/38 p 787. See also the letters of *Baptist Times*, 27/10/38 p 804, and the article of 20/10/38 p 789. Wilkinson considers the issue of appeasement in some detail in his chapter, 'Can Dictators be Pacified' [*Dissent or Conform?* pp 137 to 189]; Hastings, *English Christianity*, Cap 23, 'Munich and All That,' pp 347ff.
32. Letter to the editor of *The Times*, 31/10/38 p 12. cf Aubrey's support for the Archbishop of Canterbury's Call to Prayer in the late summer and early autumn of 1938 [*The Times*, 16/9/38, p 13; 20/9/38 p 7;

- 1/11/38 p 10.
33. *Baptist Times*, 10/11/38 p 840.
 34. *Baptist Times*, 10/11/38 p 847.
 35. *Baptist Times*, 29/12/38 p 1006. On the correspondence generated by this report, see, for example: *Baptist Times*, 12/1/39 p 24; 19/1/39 p 44; 26/1/39 p 64.
 36. *Baptist Times*, 9/2/39 p 107.
 37. *Baptist Times*, 23/3/39 p 227.
 38. *Baptist Times*, 23/3/39 p 227. See also: *Baptist Times*, 30/3/39 p 247; 6/4/39 p 267; 13/4/39 p 287; 20/4/39 p 301; 4/5/39 p 341.
 39. *Baptist Times*, 4/5/39 p 347.
 40. *Baptist Times*, 11/5/39 p 364. cf also: *Baptist Times*, 18/5/39 pp 383f; 25/5/39 p 404; 13/7/39 p 546; 31/8/39 p 663.
 41. *Baptist Times*, 11/5/39 p 367.
 42. For example: *Baptist Times*, 17/8/39 p 629; 24/8/39 p 645; 24/8/39 p 651; 31/8/39 p 661; 31/8/39 p 663.
 43. *Baptist Times*, 7/9/39 pp 677f. For the impact of the war, see: *Baptist Times*, 7/9/37 p 679; 7/9/39 p 683; 14/9/39 p 695; 14/9/39 p 697; 14/9/39 p 699.
 44. *Baptist Times*, 14/9/39 p 701. See also: Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* pp 232 ff; *Baptist Times*, 14/9/39 pp 703ff; 21/9/39 p 716; 28/9/39 p 728; 5/10/39 p 739; 12/10/39 p 751; 19/10/39 p 766; 26/10/39 p 775, 778; 16/11/39 pp 826f; 7/12/39 p 880.
 45. *Baptist Times*, 5/10/39 p 742.
 46. *Baptist Times*, 19/10/39 p 761.
 47. *Baptist Times*, 7/12/39 p 897. The complex relationship between Hitler and Stalin is most recently discussed by Alan Bullock in his *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (London, 1991).
 48. cf K Robbins, 'Free Churchmen and the Twenty Years Crisis,' *Baptist Quarterly*, 1977, XXVII, pp 346ff. See also: P Clark, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches* (London, 1981); Hastings, *English Christianity*, p 311.
 49. Clements, 'A Question of Freedom,' p 98. Hastings regards this as the crucial point in the evoking of support from British Christians [*English Christianity*, pp 337ff].
 50. *Baptist Times*, 14/3/35 p 203.
 51. *Baptist Times*, 14/3/35 p 209. cf Ceadel, *Pacifism* pp 207ff.
 52. *Baptist Times*, 14/3/35 p 209.
 53. *Baptist Times*, 11/4/35 p 275.
 54. *Baptist Times*, 11/4/35 p 275.
 55. *Baptist Times*, 25/4/35 p 315.
 56. *Baptist Times*, 2/5/35 p 335.
 57. *Baptist Times*, 5/9/35 p 651.
 58. *Baptist Times*, 17/10/35 p 749.
 59. Aubrey to Mrs Buxton, 23/4/37; Mrs Buxton to Aubrey, 27/4/37.
 60. *Baptist Times*, 5/12/35 p 891.
 61. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/36 p 27.
 62. *Baptist Times*, 7/1/37 p 7. See also: *Annual Report: 1937*, p 45.
 63. *Baptist Times*, 11/3/37 p 187.
 64. See: Aubrey to Mrs Buxton, 2/3/37, where Aubrey records a meeting between Dr Hans Bohm of Berlin with Rushbrooke and himself; Aubrey to Mrs Buxton, 24/3/37.
 65. Aubrey to Mrs Buxton, 5/4/37, 7/5/37; German Ambassador to the Court of St James to Aubrey, 27/4/37.
 66. Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* pp 158ff.
 67. *Baptist Times*, 1/7/37 p 499.
 68. Aubrey to Mrs Buxton, 2/7/37.

69. *Baptist Times*, 8/7/37 p 515. Significantly, even so staunch an evangelical as Lindsay Glegg regarded Niemöller as a fellow-traveller [cf Glegg, *Four Score...and More*, pp 43f]. Despite such commendations, it is crucial to understand that the Confessing pastors were often not avowedly anti-Nazi as such. Indeed, they tended towards theological liberalism and political conservatism [cf Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp 340f. cf Aubrey to Mrs Buxton, 2/7/37].
70. *Baptist Times*, 22/7/37 p 551.
71. *Baptist Times*, 22/7/37 p 553.
72. See, for example, *Baptist Times*, 29/7/37 p 568; 5/8/37 p 584; 12/8/37 p 600; 19/8/37 p 616; 26/8/37 p 632.
73. *Baptist Times*, 7/10/37 p 751.
74. *Baptist Times*, 3/2/38 p 83.
75. *Baptist Times*, 10/3/38 p 187.
76. *Baptist Times*, 21/4/38 p 306.
77. *Baptist Times*, 19/5/38 p 384.
78. *Baptist Times*, 18/8/38 p 639. See also: *Baptist Times*, 15/12/38 p 967.
79. *Baptist Times*, 29/6/39 p 503.
80. *Baptist Times*, 11/7/35 p 519. As with the Baptist support for Pastor Niemöller, of significance in this discussion is the observation that British evangelicals regarded Haile Selassie as a co-religionist. [cf Glegg, *Four score..and more*, pp 48f. cf *Baptist Times*, 27/7/35 p 551; 1/8/35 p 567; 8/8/35 p 588.
81. *Baptist Times*, 8/8/35 p 587.
82. *Baptist Times*, 8/8/35 p 588.
83. *Baptist Times*, 17/8/35 p 603.
84. *Baptist Times*, 22/8/35 p 621; 22/8/35 p 619; 29/8/35 p 635.
85. *Baptist Times*, 17/10/35 p 751. Bebbington discusses latent Baptist fear of Popery in 'Baptists and Fundamentalism,' p 308. See also: J Wolffe, 'The Evangelical Alliance in the 1840s,' in *Voluntary Religion*, pp 340, 346. Hastings also concludes that Mussolini did, indeed, 'use' the Italian Catholic Church for his own ends [*English Christianity*, pp 169, 311, 314ff]; cf Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, p 20.
86. *Baptist Times*, 5/9/35 p 651.
87. *Baptist Times*, 12/9/35 p 663. For letters dealing with this debate see, for example, *Baptist Times*, 12/9/35 p 664; 19/9/35 p 680.
88. *Baptist Times*, 12/9/35 p 667.
89. *Baptist Times*, 12/9/35 p 668.
90. *Baptist Times*, 19/9/35 p 678. This edition of the *Baptist Times* also carried full coverage of the final speeches of the Geneva Conference.
91. *Baptist Times*, 10/10/35 p 735f.
92. *Baptist Times*, 17/10/35 p 751.
93. *Baptist Times*, 9/1/36 p 25. See also 16/1/36 p 47 and 23/1/36 p 73.
94. *Baptist Times*, 6/2/36 p 103.
95. See, for example: *Baptist Times*, 27/2/36 p 159; 5/3/36 p 179; 26/3/36 p 235.
96. *Baptist Times*, 20/2/36 p 139.
97. *Baptist Times*, 27/2/36 p 159.
98. *Baptist Times*, 12/3/36 p 195.
99. *Baptist Times*, 2/4/36 p 255.
100. *Baptist Times*, 7/5/36 p 351.
101. *Baptist Times*, 17/7/36 p 559.
102. *Baptist Times*, 2/9/37 p 651.
103. *Annual Report: 1938*, p 8.
104. See, Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* pp 168 to 170.
105. *Baptist Times*, 30/7/36 p 591.

106. *Baptist Times*, 13/8/36 p 623.
107. *Baptist Times*, 27/8/36 p 655. See also, Porritt's article of 10/9/36 p 687.
108. *Baptist Times*, 1/10/36 p 743.
109. *Baptist Times*, 8/10/36 p 763.
110. *Baptist Times*, 10/12/36 p 963.
111. *Baptist Times*, 14/1/37 p 27.
112. *Baptist Times*, 6/5/37 p 347.
113. *Baptist Times*, 8/7/37 p 519. Cf Wilkinson's comments on the stand taken by Bishop C F Garbet against the Guernica raid. [Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?* pp 168 to 170.]
114. *Baptist Times*, 25/2/37 p 147; 20/5/37 p 391; 27/5/37 p 411.
115. *Baptist Times*, 24/3/38 p 227.
116. *Baptist Times*, 30/6/38 p 507.
117. Payne, J H Rushbrooke, p 63.
118. *Baptist Times*, 2/2/39 p 87. See also: *Baptist Times*, 2/3/39 p 167.
119. *Baptist Times*, 1/6/39 pp 421f.
120. *Baptist Times*, 15/7/37 p 539.
121. *Baptist Times*, 5/8/37 p 587. See also: *Baptist Times*, 19/8/37 p 619. cf Hastings, *English Christianity*, p 331.
122. *Baptist Times*, 26/8/37 p 635.
123. *Baptist Times*, 2/9/37 p 651. See also: *Baptist Times*, 9/9/37 p 668.
124. *Annual Report: 1937*, p 18.
125. *Baptist Times*, 23/12/37 p 995.
126. *Baptist Times*, 10/2/38 p 107.
127. *Baptist Times*, 3/3/38 p 162.
128. *Baptist Times*, 17/3/38 p 207. See also: *Baptist Times*, 14/4/38 p 287.
129. *Baptist Times*, 16/6/38 p 467.
130. *Baptist Times*, 22/6/39 p 487. On the issue of Baptist responses to the Japanese invasion of China, see: B Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp 314ff.
131. cf ed D K Kirkwood, *European Baptists: a magnificent minority* (Valley Forge, 1981).
132. Hastings, *English Christianity*, p 173.
133. *Annual Report: 1935*, p 35.
134. *ibid*, p 33. See also: Frank C Brijan, 'Religion and Russia,' *Baptist Quarterly*, XI, 1942/45, pp 106ff.
135. *Annual Report*, p 35.
136. *ibid*, p 35.
137. *ibid*, p 36.
138. *ibid*, p 97 .
139. *Baptist Times*, 11/4/35 p 278.
140. *Baptist Times*, 24/10/35 p 773. See also: *Baptist Times*, 17/7/36 pp 557 to 561; 22/10/36 p 803; 12/11/36 pp 865 to 868; 24/6/37 pp 481 to 484.
141. *Baptist Times*, 11/4/35 p 278. See also: 21/10/37 pp 793 to 796; 4/11/37 p 826; 27/1/38 pp 69 to 71; 21/7/38 pp 569 to 572; 15/9/38 p 698; 22/9/38 p 718; 29/9/38 p 734; 13/10/38 p 762; 20/10/38 p 786; 27/10/38 p 806; 3/11/38 p 826.
142. *Baptist Times*, 3/11/38 p 829; 24/11/38 p 888; 1/12/38 p 906; 22/12/38 p 984.
143. *Baptist Times*, 29/12/38 p 1002. cf Payne, J H Rushbrooke, pp 61f.
144. *Baptist Times*, 19/1/39 p 41. See also 2/2/39 pp 89ff.
145. *Baptist Times*, 6/4/39 p 266.
146. *Baptist Times*, 20/4/39 p 307. See also 27/4/39 pp 329 to 332.
147. *Baptist Times*, 11/4/35 p 278; 27/1/38 pp 69 to 72; 21/7/38 pp 569 to 572; 16/11/39 pp 829 to 832.

148. Aubrey to Lord Halifax, 4/4/39.
149. *Baptist Times*, 2/1/35 p 7.
150. *Baptist Times*, 10/1/35 p 31.
151. *Baptist Times*, 31/1/35 p 91.
152. *Baptist Times*, 7/2/35 p 111.
153. *Baptist Times*, 16/4/36 p 289.
154. *Baptist Times*, 4/3/37 p 167.
155. *Baptist Times*, 8/4/37 p 267.
156. *Baptist Times*, 3/3/39 p 167.
157. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p 331.
158. *Annual Report: 1936*, p 45.

CHAPTER 8

Britain in the Thirties - The Croydon Experience

In this section of the thesis comparisons and contrasts are drawn between the thinking of the leadership of the Baptist denomination in the Thirties on the one hand, and the situation of particular local churches on the other. For the local dimension, the thesis focuses especially upon the borough of Croydon as represented in the two South Croydon Baptist churches. These were constituent members of the East Surrey Group of Baptist Churches. Other local churches are then considered, although in less detail, in order to test the degree of normality of the Croydon experience.

In his Oxford DPhil thesis, 'Religion and Social Change in Victorian England,'^[1] J N Morris has done much to chart the church life of Croydon for the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Morris documents the late Victorian expansion of the borough of Croydon and points out that at the time of the census of 1911 most of the migration into Croydon was from London parishes. In that year 26% of Croydon's inhabitants registered London as their place of birth. But Morris also points out that by this time the overall social status of Croydon's inhabitants was falling. Only at the extreme southern and northern fringes of the parish and the outlying hamlet of Selsdon, was there a marked tendency towards house ownership.^[2]

Anglicanism was the predominant religious confession throughout the period studied by Morris, and in Croydon it was a most prestigious form of Anglicanism. This was clearly due to the twin factors of Croydon's

continued inclusion in the Archdiocese of Canterbury and the considerable financial and political power of the church which was exercised through the Whitgift Foundation, which remained a very large landholder and landlord.[3]

Not surprisingly the newly-formed parliamentary constituency elected a Conservative MP at its foundation in 1885 and remained with that persuasion to the end of Morris' period of study in 1914. After 1914 the same pattern continued, with the one exception that in 1932 H G Williams was elected to the Croydon South constituency as an Independent (National) member.[4] By the 1935 election Williams was the Conservative candidate. Because of this resolute political conservatism local councillors appear to have been elected for their anti-socialist positions rather than for positive policies of their own.[5] Politically there was one notable exception in the person of the Liberal local councillor Reuben Barrow. He was appointed an alderman in 1883, and was able to serve in that position right through to 1914. He was also a noted Baptist layman and philanthropist.

Croydon expanded both geographically and in infrastructure during the late 1920s and early 1930s. With the addition of the parish of Addington under the Croydon Corporation Act 1928 the borough area increased to 12,617 acres with a circumference of about 45 miles.[6] The borough had been growing in population from the earliest census in 1801.[7] The peak years for such growth had been in the mid- to late-nineteenth century during the expansion of the railway systems through and from Croydon. The Brighton line had been electrified and widened in the 1920s.[8] By the 1930s the expansion rate had levelled off to approximately 1 to 2% per annum.

Although the population of Croydon was no longer expanding particularly

rapidly, the Thirties saw very rapid and widespread expansion of housing developments in the borough. The building of new estates in the borough was particularly marked in three areas, Shirley, West Croydon and points further west, and South Croydon.[9] These new housing developments in Croydon were all private.[10] They were mirrored, though less spectacularly, by similar growth in council housing schemes. Both types of growth in housing, especially on the edges of the borough, were to heighten the economic problems of the poorer members of society. The growth in the house-building industry in Croydon was a microcosm of a much wider pattern within Britain in the early Thirties.[11]

The early history of most of the individual Baptist churches in Croydon receives concise treatment in A H Stockwell's *The Baptist Churches of Surrey*. [12] Morris points out that they grew in a fairly typical manner for Nonconformists. There appear to have been two types of growth. Firstly, there was informal, unplanned growth, whereby a small cause might be started by a preacher or layman, often with a tiny following or even no following at all, and if "successful" would only gradually develop into a large circle of worshippers. Meetings might be held in the open air, or in a house or cottage, and would then progress to a small hall or an iron, temporary building.[13] The second method of growth was division by schism.[14]

Two para-church organisations were very important for Croydon Baptist churches in the early twentieth century. These were the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon and the Free Church Council. The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement had been launched in Croydon in the 1890s to strengthen ties between church members and the periphery of potential church members. The local Free Church Council was formed in Croydon in 1897. Of his period of study, ending in 1914, Morris concludes: '[There appears to have been] a

"turning point", inasmuch as such a term is appropriate, in the 1880's...a deepening sense of crisis in the churches...through to the years immediately before the First World War.'[15]

By 1930 the Baptist community in and around Croydon had developed a clear pattern of related group activities. The East Surrey Group comprised the Baptist churches of Croydon, Purley, Sutton, Epsom, Godstone, Selsdon and Wallington. The first half of the decade saw several of the churches engaged in building work. The Selsdon church opened its new extension in November 1933.[16] At about the same time the Norbury church - not in the same Baptist group, but part of the borough of Croydon - opened its new building. A year later the Croham Road church followed suit.

As early as March 1930 the vexed question of denominational decline in numbers came to the fore in Croydon Baptist circles. At the annual rally, Mr Goldsmith, the incoming president of the East Surrey Group, addressed himself to the problem quite directly. The *Croydon Advertiser* reporter could note:

'They heard with deep concern of the decline in Baptist church membership throughout the country, but noted with thankfulness that their own numbers were well maintained. Sunday school membership showed a decrease, however, but they were greatly cheered to find many young people coming forward to baptism and church membership. Mr Goldsmith....said...that with the population on which it had to draw the group should well maintain - indeed enhance - its position.'

Goldsmith moved on to his own theme for the year which was to echo that of the Baptist Union president, the Rev Arthur Newton, who had taken the theme, 'The Efficient Church': 'It is up to you and me as business

men...to show that it is possible for business men to be Christians.'[17]

At the East Surrey Group rally two years later the Rev E V Whittle of West Croydon Baptist Church: 'spoke of the keenness of young Baptists for evangelism and the evident revival of the spirit of prayer in the churches.'[18] This outward-looking attitude was to be a feature of local Baptist church life throughout the Thirties. Yet to some extent Baptist concern for evangelism sometimes led them to a sense of complacency when considering broader national and international issues. Thus in 1933 Dr J H Rushbrooke, Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance and President-Elect of the National Free Church Council, could assert at the 46th Anniversary Meeting of the Croydon Free Church Council that the current world depression was not permanent. He called upon his hearers to take a long-term view of events and referred to Baptist history in expansive mission in the nineteenth century as an example of the very positive manner in which difficult national circumstances could be seen as a catalyst for evangelistic endeavour.[19]

The nature of conurbation growth in Croydon was such that there were bound to be radically different social needs and aspirations in the various parts of the borough. Broadly speaking, the North and West of the borough contained the highest concentration of poor housing stock. To these two areas must be added the most socially deprived area of all, the Surrey Street, Bell Hill, High Street triangle - the Market area. In a sense the Market was simply a microcosm of the general social deprivation which was a constant problem in the Old Town area of Croydon.[20] For whatever reason Croydon Council remained unable to resolve this chronic problem.

To the west of the borough Beulah Baptist Church in Thornton Heath was concerned to meet the needs of its neighbourhood. For example, in July

1931, recognising the increasing problem of unemployment and its attendant boredom, the church resolved to open its tennis club to anyone who wished to join.[21] What today may seem a very small, almost derisory gesture, was for the Thirties with its acute sense of class consciousness and privilege, a brave step indeed. The church stood to lose some of its most well-to-do members by such a move.

By August 1931 the rise in unemployment in Croydon was causing grave concern. For example, the long-serving Councillor Roden had stated that the number of jobless in the borough had doubled since the same time in 1930. Amongst other suggestions made by a correspondent to the *Croydon Advertiser* was the proposal that: 'A conference of local people keen on this subject or a frank discussion in the papers would produce a sheaf of sound workable ideas, although there would probably be many impossible ones as well.'[22] However, by year end, events in Croydon were beginning to take a turn for the worse. At the November meeting of the Croydon Public Assistance Committee a deputation was received from the Croydon branch of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement.[23] While the deputation was inside the Town Hall a demonstration was held outside. The deputation represented 460 unemployed persons in the borough. Their demands were several:

'One hundred-weight of coal per week for each unemployed worker. Pint of milk for each unemployed worker. A pair of boots to be given to each unemployed worker. Council house rents not to exceed ten per cent of income. Free use of baths and washhouses for unemployed. Local men only to be employed by the Council and rota system to be enforced. Conveniences to be provided at the Labour Exchange. Free use of a hall for the unemployed. Cuts in unemployment benefit to be made up by the

Public Assistance Committee.'

The members of the deputation were permitted to present and expand their case. The committee's position was, however, that their duty was simply to apply regulations that had been passed down to them from higher authorities. Heated though the argument became the deputation left peaceably.

In July 1932 a half-page report in the *Croydon Advertiser* on the inevitable summer glut of garden parties was prefaced with the incisive comment: 'The general depression about which so much is heard these days, seems to have missed the many garden fetes and bazaars held in Croydon and district.'^[24] The Baptist churches were inevitably included in that number. This sense of the two worlds present in the one borough came through even more sharply in the comments of the rector of West Wickham, the Rev C A Shaw Page, in a sermon preached in June 1932: 'If people who can't go on holiday change bedrooms and sleep on the other side of the house and change their baker and get a fillip to their appetite, they will get half the benefit of a holiday at the seaside.'^[25]

Fortunately, other Christian people were more practical in their concern. A little while earlier the Society of Friends had opened a rest room for the use of the unemployed. Delighted with the use to which this facility was being put they desired to take matters further. They noted in a letter to the *Croydon Advertiser* that: '...it has become increasingly obvious that there is a real need for a more comprehensive scheme of help for the unemployed in Croydon. We would suggest that the time has come for setting up an Occupational Centre where men could have facilities for making and repairing boots, clothing, furniture and the like for themselves and their families. In all cases production would be for

personal use and would be confined to work that would not otherwise be done.'[26] It was further suggested that a women's room could be set aside with a canteen and reading area. What is so striking about these proposals is that they were clearly arrived at through consultation with those who would be the prospective users of the facilities. The Friends had even made contacts with the bodies that they felt might be of greatest assistance. These included the Corporation, the Trades Unions, the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, TOC H, Croydon Christian Council, the Free Church Council, the Croydon Council of Social Services, other churches, social workers and private individuals. The mayor, Alderman William Peet, had agreed to chair the planning committee. By the end of July 1932 the scheme had received the approval of the Council and premises had been acquired. The site of the Whitgift School was to become the initial home of the scheme until more permanent premises could be found.

Whilst unrest amongst the unemployed continued throughout the autumn of 1932, even reaching the point of rioting on one occasion when seven were arrested and charged with using insulting words and behaviour,[27] the Centre for the Unemployed was soon a great success, catering for some 200 or more men every day.[28] This local rioting was one of many such incidents which occurred in 1932. The government took the line that these were coordinated under the leadership of the National Union of Working Men. These minor riots were neither reported nor commented upon in the *Baptist Times*.

In January 1933 Alderman Peet held a meeting to consider the problem of unemployment in the borough. In response to this meeting an executive was formed comprising amongst others representatives of the Free Church Council.[29] The essence of the committee's thinking was stated in the mayor's letter to the press later in January. There he stated:

'The main idea behind this plan is to induce all who are in a position to do so to put in hand extra work, to make some extra purchase of British articles, and to encourage the spending of money in the town. If the movement is supported it is bound beneficially to affect the unemployment problem. More and more money will be circulated, more business will be done, more people will be put into work and the miseries resulting from unemployment will be considerably lessened.'

[30]

Unemployment remained a major issue for the Council and the borough at large throughout 1933. The mayor's proposals were, of course, fully taken on board by local businessmen. The large advertisements which appeared in the press spoke of the great support being offered to the unemployed through buying from local shops and using local tradesmen.

[31]

As has been discussed already, a major moral debate both nationally and in Croydon in the early 1930s, revolved around the question of the Sunday opening of cinemas. Study of the local newspapers of the period leads to the conclusion that the debate was actually much wider than might at first be supposed. This study of the Sunday debate began as something of a discursus but it appears, on reflection, to have been a watershed in the relationship of Nonconformists in general and Baptists in particular with both the civic authorities and the Anglican religious dominance in Croydon. As the decade opened, the local battle lines were already well drawn. Writing in the letters column of the *Croydon Advertiser* on 11 January 1930 one John Hill put succinctly the libertarian position: 'Men and women have a right in whatever numbers to amuse themselves in their own way and have no right in these matters to dictate to others.' That week a meeting

convened under the auspices of the Free Church Council was addressed by the Rev E J Barson. Amongst his other comments on the social system of his day he suggested a novel solution to the problem of the Sunday opening of cinemas. Surely they should be treated in the same way as churches. There should be a voluntary collection, and all profits from the box-office takings should be forwarded to local hospitals.[32] In the same edition of the *Croydon Advertiser* 'Croydonian' declared himself in favour of cinemas opening on a Sunday whilst John T Wilson declared himself in opposition, although he was careful to point out that he was not opposed to cinemas *per se*. In February the debate was reopened when an angry 'Man in the Street' accused both the churches and the borough Council of gross inconsistency when he discovered that a new mission hall was to have its road rates paid by the Council. What right, he argued, did the Council have to disburse ratepayers' monies to a section of the community that was set on deliberately preventing the majority of Croydonians from enjoying the Sunday in whatever way they wished?[33]

By May the borough Council had placed the matter of Sunday opening of amenities and cinemas on its agenda. Three weeks before the Council meeting Councillor Rev A F G Fletcher spoke for the opening of cinemas at a meeting convened by the Croydon Federation of Rate Payers Associations. Fletcher argued that all amenities, including cinemas, should be available to the public on Sundays, and on Sunday evenings in particular. He advocated the levying of a penny rate if finance appeared to be an objection. His inquiries had already revealed that the Church of England Deanery was in favour of such a move and he foresaw no Free Church objections.[34] At a second public meeting a week later Fletcher had a much stormier ride. He was forced to concede that: 'A recent analysis of two hundred and forty-nine films showed that they contained fifty-one

scenes of adultery, nineteen seductions, ninety-seven murders, forty-five suicides and twenty-two abductions. The outlet of the moral sewer of America was in our cinemas and the filth was pumped into the minds of the people through the medium of the screen.' [35] At the Council meeting on 31 May 1930 the proposals to allow the Sunday opening of cinemas was defeated. 'A Croydonian' wrote to the *Croydon Advertiser* in protest. [36]

The issue arose once more at the Croydon Free Church Council on 22 June 1930. 'Vigorous' discussion took place after introductory speeches. Councillor Hammond expressed concern that the Christian view on Sunday cinemas should be set out in a public meeting. He was also concerned that the adoption of any negative attitude on this issue should be discountenanced. It was agreed by the large number of delegates present that a public meeting should be convened in September prior to the borough Council's annual review of entertainment and other licences. [37] Popular feeling at this time seemed to favour the idea of a free vote amongst the populace on the question of the Sunday opening of cinemas. [38]

On 26 July it was reported that the Council had granted a special licence to the Croydon Streets of Adventure for a single showing of a film on a Sunday evening. Fletcher was vociferous in his objections, not least on the grounds that this would be a most unhelpful precedent for the Council to set. [39] Councillor Rev Fletcher left Croydon in the autumn of 1930. [40] The promised Free Church Council public debate took place in mid-September 1930. The guest speaker for the evening, Dr A H Gray of London, took pains to declare himself both a Christian and a member of the Labour Party. In his opinion common sense had to be exercised in the consideration of what was permissible on a Sunday. Transport should be allowed. So should individual sports such as golf and tennis. But if others needed to work in order for those sports to be practicable then

that should be considered harmful. On that basis the opening of shops, even for the selling of newspapers and tobacco, and the opening of cinemas would both be precluded.^[41] One person present was very quick to respond to the events at that meeting. He managed to have his letter published in the *Croydon Advertiser* a full week before the meeting was itself reported! In his reasoned argument for the Sunday opening of cinemas he also noted with concern three aspects of the sabbatarian party's approach:

'1. Their confidence that they, and they alone, knew and could interpret the will of God. 2. The implication and indeed the assertion that the "enemy"...was influenced primarily by motives of commercial gain. 3. Their varying accounts of the nature and origin of Sunday and their assertion that only the British Sunday (by which they meant the Puritan Sunday) could be considered as Christian.'^[42]

The Free Church Council debate^[43] and that under the auspices of the Lord's Day Observance Society^[44] received detailed coverage in the *Croydon Advertiser*. The latter meeting, in particular, appears to have been something of a rubber-stamping exercise. Admission was by ticket and only three persons present indicated their disapproval of the motion: 'That this meeting, believing the maintaining of the Christian Day of Rest and Worship to be essential to the higher well-being of the community, respectfully appeals to the Mayor and Corporation to reject all applications which may be made for the Sunday openings of Cinemas in the borough of Croydon.'^[45] The *Croydon Advertiser's* report of this meeting did much to reveal its own pro-opening position. Letters followed in large numbers.^[46]

The third major public debate was that sponsored by the North End

Brotherhood. The speaker, Mr Wrench, its founder, warned his hearers of what he perceived to be the less than laudable motives of the cinema owners. He brought a six-fold indictment:

'That the cinema proprietors are simply out to make money and do not care two straws what the public wish; and have no regard for British national traditions. That Sunday trading and the opening of cinemas on Sundays are parts of one question. That Sunday picture houses will, more than anything else, hasten general Sunday work and trading. That general Sunday trading will ultimately mean that hundreds of thousands of persons will be compelled to work seven days a week, whether they want to or not, lest they should lose their jobs. That general Sunday trading will arrest every kind of social progress, kill Sunday as a weekly day of rest and recreation, break up family life and shatter the basis of family welfare. That with increased Sunday trading the workers stand to gain nothing, but, instead, lose everything.'^[47]

It was further suggested that one of the major factors in the whole problem of the Sunday opening of cinemas and other places of business was that many of these premises were now owned by immigrants for whom Sunday was not a special day. Letters continued to flood in to the *Croydon Advertiser* office. One which stands out was from Councillor Hubert Dees who estimated that he had received nearly 500 letters in favour of the Sunday opening of cinemas and only 3 against.

All parties approached the October 1930 Council meeting with much anticipation. The tension was heightened by the knowledge that at the September meeting permission had been granted for the celebrated violinist Kreisler to perform on Sunday 8 February 1931 at the Grand Theatre.^[48]

That decision had been taken by a 29:19 majority with three councillors abstaining. The October Council meeting, however, voted by 27:26 not to permit the Sunday opening of cinemas. Week after week until the end of the year the letters columns of the *Croydon Advertiser* were dominated by this one subject.[49] Just as the issue was beginning to recede from public consciousness the Croydon Women Citizen's Association and the National Council of Women Rally stirred emotions again when it passed by 22:15 (with many abstentions) a motion: 'That this meeting is of the opinion that cinema entertainments as now conducted are detrimental to the moral welfare of the community.'[50]

Most months of 1931 had some coverage of the debate, with the *Croydon Advertiser* increasingly yielding to the temptation to make its editorial position apparent. In January 1931 a letter to the editor condemned the notion that the proposed Purley Ice Rink might be opened to the public on Sundays.[51] At the end of the month it was reported that the borough Council had refused the use of the Davis Theatre for a charity showing of a film to the benefit of the Croydon Voluntary Association for the Blind. Despite a heated debate the proposal to grant such permission was defeated by 23:27.[52] In February the Croydon Chamber of Commerce condemned all forms of Sunday trading.[53] And that same month the Rev Idris Evans, minister of George Street Congregational Church, used a Sunday evening sermon to declaim against all forms of Sunday business. This included street markets and all other shops. His concern was in part because these establishments were increasingly owned by: 'sinners [who] were Jews and aliens.' Yet again the racial prejudices of British people was tapped as part of a wider campaign against changes in the Sunday trading regulations. Evans actually extended his nationalistic concern to include America, and this was particularly expressed in the context of cinema in

general: 'Ninety per cent of the films come from America, dictated to the entire world by five or six men of Southern European extraction and with a viewpoint entirely alien...'[54]

In May 1931 the Croydon Chamber of Commerce was again debating the issue. Their invited speaker, Mr Scott Mason, spoke against the proposed Shops and Trading Restrictions Bill.[55] All then remained quiet until the November Council meeting when the question of licensing cinemas for Sunday opening again arose. This time the motion to change the Council's established policy was again defeated by one vote, 28:29.[56] As usual letters to the editor of the *Croydon Advertiser* and the *Croydon Times* followed apace.

By mid-1932 feelings in the borough were, however, beginning to run very high indeed. When the anti-Sunday-opening Councillor Hammond presented his case for renomination for the Ratepayers Party, East Ward, his stand in Council the year before against the Sunday opening of cinemas did not go unnoticed. Indeed, he faced considerable opposition from the floor on this issue. He was, nevertheless, renominated.[57] That autumn the Sunday Entertainment Act was passed by both Houses of Parliament. This meant, and the *Croydon Advertiser* was quick to point this out, that if the borough Council so desired it could exercise the power to permit local opening of cinemas on Sundays. This was conditional on a plebiscite being conducted if not less than 100 electors so demanded. The October Council meeting received deputations for and against proposed changes in the bye-laws. The two groups were led by Bishop Edward Woods and Councillor Hammond respectively. After lengthy debate the Council resolved 31:19 to submit the matter to the electors.[58] This decision did not go unchallenged. Most notably the Rev W E Bristow, vicar of Woodside, declaimed against the whole procedure in a trenchant sermon.[59] By way of contrast the Bishop

agreed to lead the Sunday Films Association.

The next public round in this long-running battle was the submission of an application for a licence permitting the Sunday opening of the Davis Theatre.^[60] That same week the *Croydon Advertiser* commented that: 'There is every indication that the coming fight over the vexed and long debated question of the Sunday opening of Cinemas in Croydon is to be in many respects one of the keenest contests witnessed in the borough.'^[61] The Sunday Cinema Association and the Keep Your Sunday Association both launched strenuous campaigns, the former encouraged by the news that Shoeburyness had led the way to change with a decisive 484 to 91 vote in favour of Sunday opening of cinemas.

As it had done on each previous occasion that change had been mooted, the North End Brotherhood again held public meetings to campaign against changes. At the first such meeting the Rev Dr Donald Soper, Superintendent Minister of the Methodist Central London Mission, was reported as saying: '...as Christians in the past had not awakened to the fact that the cinema could be used in the interests of the Kingdom of God the industry had got completely into the hands of the mid-European Jews living in New York who governed it by box office standards and none other. When printing came in, the Church used it for immediately circulating the Bible. The next great revolutionary feature in education was the cinema, but when it arrived it found the Church sleeping.'^[62] A week later the main speaker at the Brotherhood - on the same subject - was Dr S W Hughes, late of Westbourne Park Baptist Church, the newly appointed secretary of the National Free Church Council.^[63]

The two local Baptist ministers publicly involved in this campaign were the Rev E V Whittle from West Croydon and the Rev Samuel Brown of Holmesdale, South Norwood. The latter launched a stinging attack on the

Bishop of Croydon in a letter to the *Croydon Advertiser*:

'While I am writing on this question I am bound to say that I am as much, or more, concerned with the kind of film which has been presented to the cinema-going public six days a week during the past ten or fifteen years as I am about the question of Sunday opening. I hope that something will be done to purify the poisonous river which flows out of Hollywood.'[64]

The Bishop of Croydon was already less than popular with many local Nonconformists on account of his sympathies with the teaching and practices of the Oxford Group. His daughter, Janet, was an active campaigner and platform speaker in local Anglican churches. In 1933 the North End Brotherhood had been addressed by Mr J A Kensit, Secretary of the Protestant Truth Society, who attacked the Oxford Group Movement in general and Bishop Woods in particular.[65] Bishop Woods, was, in fact, broadly evangelical in his sympathies, being deeply influenced by such disparate sources as F B Meyer, the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement, the Keswick Movement, the Student Christian Movement and, as already noted, the Oxford Group Movement.[66] The Baptist Union General Secretary, Aubrey, went so far as to describe him as 'my friend Edward Woods.'[67]

The final stage of the campaign saw emotions reaching near fever pitch.[68] On the 3 December 1932 the *Croydon Advertiser* ran the banner headline, 'The Voice of Croydon.'[69] It showed a majority of 10,231 electors in favour of the Sunday opening of cinemas, a vote of 34,617:24,386. Outside the Town Hall a waiting crowd cheered wildly as the result was announced. Effectively the debate was at an end. Occasional letters and articles appeared in the local press,[70] but those opposed to

the opening of cinemas on Sundays were no longer able to claim that: 'the majority do not want Sunday opening.' 12 March 1933 saw the first official opening of a cinema on a Sunday. The day prior to this event the *Croydon Advertiser* carried a full page of advertisements for the various picture houses.^[71] Some 10,000 persons were reported to have attended the various performances.^[72] The *Croydon Advertiser* gave full coverage to this event and reviews of all the films shown.

In setting the context for local church studies in Croydon it can readily be seen that the Baptist churches were struggling to maintain their sense of self-identity. As the borough continued its growth, so many of the older social and religious ties became strained. In microcosm, this strain can be seen in the debates over the Sunday opening of cinemas. Indeed, amongst the Croydon populace at large the Sunday cinema debate loomed so large as to constitute a virtual pre-occupation. Significantly, on a borough-wide level the debate witnessed further division between Nonconformists and Anglicans. It may fairly be asserted that the intensity of religious concern over the issue of Sunday cinema stood in sharp contrast to the relatively slight concern expressed over other social issues such as unemployment and attendant social deprivation. In the two chapters which follow two local Baptist churches will be examined in detail in order to determine their social viewpoint and to compare it with both that for Croydon Nonconformity as a whole and the leadership of the Baptist Union in general.

Footnotes to Chapter 8:

1. J N Morris, 'Religion and Social Change in Victorian England: A Case Study of the Borough of Croydon 1840-1914' (Oxford DPhil, 1985).
2. Morris, 'Religion and Social Change,' p 47.
3. For a wider discussion of this phenomenon, see: Martin, *A Sociology of English Religion*, p 28.

4. *Ward's Directory: 1937 (Croydon Advertiser)*, LXIII.
5. See, for example: R B Bannerman, *Royal Croydon* (London, 1934), *passim*.
6. *Ward's Directory, 1937*, XXXVI, *Croydon Advertiser*.
7. The relevant figures for the population of the London borough of Croydon are:

1801:	5748	Percentage increase in decade:				N/A
1811:	7903	"	"	"	"	: 37%
1821:	9279	"	"	"	"	: 17%
1831:	12479	"	"	"	"	: 34%
1841:	16733	"	"	"	"	: 34%
1851:	20548	"	"	"	"	: 22%
1861:	30663	"	"	"	"	: 49%
1871:	56123	"	"	"	"	: 83%
1881:	79615	"	"	"	"	: 41%
1891:	102697	"	"	"	"	: 28%
1901:	133895	"	"	"	"	: 30%
1911:	169551	"	"	"	"	: 26%
1921:	190877	"	"	"	"	: 12%
1931:	233115	"	"	"	"	: 22%

Registrar General's Estimate:

1933:	239950	"	"	2 years	:	2%
1934:	240600	"	"	1 "	:	<1%
1935:	242100	"	"	" "	:	<1%
1936:	246500	"	"	" "	:	2%

Source: *Ward's Directory, 1937*, XXXVI, *Croydon Advertiser*. cf Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, p 24.

8. Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, p 25.
9. *Croydon Advertiser*, *passim*.
10. cf H Barrett and J Phillips, *Suburban Style: The British Home 1860-1960* (London, 1987); A A Jackson, *Semi-detached London: Suburban development, life and transport, 1900-39* (London, 1973); J Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1970* (London, 1980).
11. Further discussion of this point is conducted in S Pollard, *The Development of the British Economy, 1914-1950* (London, 1962); Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p 11; Jenkins, *Baldwin*, pp 21f.
12. A H Stockwell, *The Baptist Churches of Surrey* (London, undated, my estimate, circa 1909).
13. Morris, *Religion and Social Change*, p 166.
14. *ibid*, p 171.
15. *ibid*, p 397.
16. *Croydon Advertiser*, 11/11/33 p 5.
17. *Croydon Advertiser*, 15/3/30.
18. *Croydon Advertiser*, 11/11/33 p 3.
19. *Croydon Advertiser*, 25/2/33 p 6.
20. The detailed social structure of the triangle was the subject of my Open University D203 research project: 'A Study of Middle Street, Croydon, based upon the Census record for 1851.' Cox, too, refers to the pockets of poverty scattered throughout South London, and specifically identifies Croydon as containing such areas. [Cox, *English Churches in a Secular Society*, p 31]
21. *Croydon Advertiser*, 4/7/31 p 2.
22. *Croydon Advertiser*, 22/8/31 p 16.
23. *Croydon Advertiser*, 21/11/31 p 13.
24. *Croydon Advertiser*, 2/7/32 p 16.
25. *Croydon Advertiser*, 9/7/32 p 10.
26. *Croydon Advertiser*, 16/7/32 p 10.

27. *Croydon Advertiser*, 1/10/32 p 13; 8/10/32 p 10.
28. *Croydon Advertiser*, 22/10/32 p 8. cf Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, pp 145 to 165, 166 to 194, 218 to 244, 265 to 282.
29. *ibid*, p 231.
30. *Croydon Advertiser*, 14/1/33 p 3.
31. *Croydon Advertiser*, 21/1/33 p 11.
32. *Croydon Advertiser*, 18/1/30. The Croydon Council had refused applications for the Sunday opening of cinemas on many occasions previously. See, for example: *Croydon Advertiser*, 16/10/11; 12/10/14; 17/12/17; 2/8/22; 3/10/27; 1/10/28; 26/11/28. See also: Croydon Libraries Service Folios 760-5400 X 5631 and fS70(263)CRO Accession 32114.
33. *Croydon Advertiser*, 8/2/30.
34. *Croydon Advertiser*, 10/5/30.
35. *Croydon Advertiser*, 17/5/30.
36. *Croydon Advertiser*, 14/6/30.
37. *Croydon Advertiser*, 28/6/30.
38. See, for example, the letters by B W Alais (*Croydon Advertiser*, 12/7/30 p 10) and 'Unbiased' (*Croydon Advertiser*, 23/8/30 p 5).
39. *Croydon Advertiser*, 26/7/30 p 9.
40. *Croydon Advertiser*, 27/9/30 p 2.
41. *Croydon Advertiser*, 27/9/30 p 6.
42. *Croydon Advertiser*, 20/9/30 p 14.
43. *Croydon Advertiser*, 27/9/30 p 18.
44. *Croydon Advertiser*, 20/9/30 p 9.
45. *Croydon Advertiser*, 20/9/30 p 9.
46. *Croydon Advertiser*, 27/9/30 p 18; 4/10/30 p 3.
47. *Croydon Advertiser*, 4/10/30 p 18.
48. *Croydon Advertiser*, 4/10/30 p 9.
49. See, for example: *Croydon Advertiser*, 11/10/30 pp 11, 20; 18/10/30 p 11; 25/10/30 p 11; 1/11/30 p 24; 8/11/30 pp 13, 22.
50. *Croydon Advertiser*, 13/12/30 p 11.
51. *Croydon Advertiser*, 3/1/31 p 15.
52. *Croydon Advertiser*, 31/1/31 p 10.
53. *Croydon Advertiser* 21/2/31 p 11.
54. *Croydon Advertiser*, 21/2/31 p 16.
55. *Croydon Advertiser*, 23/5/31 p 10.
56. *Croydon Advertiser*, 28/11/31 p 13.
57. *Croydon Advertiser*, 9/7/32 p 13.
58. *Croydon Advertiser*, 8/10/32 p 13.
59. *Croydon Advertiser*, 15/10/32 p 13.
60. *Croydon Advertiser*, 22/10/32 p 8.
61. *Croydon Advertiser*, 22/10/32 p 13.
62. *Croydon Advertiser*, 22/10/32 p 20.
63. *Croydon Advertiser*, 29/10/32 p 8.
64. *Croydon Advertiser*, 29/10/32 p 13.
65. *Croydon Advertiser*, 21/1/33 p 4.
66. cf O Tomkins, *The Life of Edward Woods* (London, 1957), pp 31 to 44.
67. Aubrey to Mrs Buxton, 13/10/37.
68. *Croydon Advertiser*, 5/11/32 p 4; 5/11/32 p 13; 5/11/32 p 13; 12/11/32 p 13; 19/11/32 p 13.
69. *Croydon Advertiser*, 3/12/32 p 13.
70. See, for example: *Croydon Advertiser*, 3/3/34 p 9.
71. *Croydon Advertiser* 11/3/33 p 4.
72. *Croydon Advertiser*, 18/3/33 p 2.

Chapter 9

South Croydon: Croham Road Baptist Church

The Baptist church at Croham Road, South Croydon, was formed in 1892/3^[1] as an evangelical Nonconformist fellowship. After an initial pastorate under a former member of the London City Mission, Walter Scott Godfrey, the church settled down to a long and steady period of growth under the leadership of the Rev Andrew John Reid. The latter, a Spurgeon's College-trained minister, who had previously been minister at Shoreham-on-Sea, was deeply involved in the broader Croydon community, especially as chaplain to various hospitals. His ministry ended with his sudden death in 1925, but he was soon succeeded by the Rev Walter G Davis - a rather better educated and more sophisticated character altogether. Indeed, if careful pastoral oversight had been the foundation of the church under A J Reid, its continued development was to be due to the visionary administrative skills of his successor.

By the 1930s the church had a well-established Sunday school and a cricket team which was formed from the membership of the Bible class. As to the social setting of the Church in the early 1930s, Browne and Tullett give a neat description in their *Bernard Spilsbury: His Life and Cases*. There they describe: '...[a] neighbourhood whose very street names suggest comfortable means, pleasant homes, well-tended gardens and well-dressed children, servants, cars, golf, and, perhaps, a certain smugness.'^[2]

The decade began for Croham Road on a most optimistic note. It had been resolved that the Thirties should be launched with a series of meetings for 'The Deepening of the Spiritual Life' from 11 to 14 March 1930. A formidable array of evangelical luminaries led Bible teaching evenings

throughout that period. Amongst them were Montague Goodman, the Rev A H Lunn, A Lindsay Glegg (the lay-leader at Down Lodge Hall, Wandsworth) and the former missionary and Chaplain General to the Forces, the Rt Rev Bishop Taylor Smith. The latter had been considerably influential in the developing ecclesiastical career of the Bishop of Croydon from 1927 to 1937, Edward Woods.^[3] This involvement of "big names" and links with the broader Keswick ethos was to prove a characteristic feature of Davis' ministry.^[4]

Throughout this period the church membership remained in the 130/140 range despite the increasing geographical mobility of its membership. In a single service in 1932 10 persons were baptised. Of these, 9 were women.^[5] A brief analysis of the coming and going of members proves of interest at this point, although sadly, records do not exist giving the social backgrounds of these various mobile members. However, a number of observations may be made from the evidence available. Firstly, it is significant that the majority of those members who were moving to and from Croydon at this period were women. Secondly, the areas from which people were moving were of two types, viz the older, once select Victorian residential zones (such as Woolwich, West Norwood, Brixton, and Addiscombe), and a second group of provincial towns. Thirdly, those moving from the church tended to move either around the London suburban village arc or right away from London. This might be a reflection within the church of the established patterns of movement for the South Croydon area at this time. New, desirable residences were being erected for the professional classes, many of whom could afford to employ live-in domestic help. South Croydon was becoming one of the strategic commuter villages serving the capital. The movements into the church membership appear to reflect the presence of both of these groups of people - the better off

and the servant class, most of the latter still in "service." Of especial interest in this list of movements are the references to people moving to Croydon from Wales.[6] One such person, referred to by name in the Deacons' Minutes for 20 January 1939, was said to have a family still at home in North Wales. This might be seen as confirmation of Stevenson and Cook's argument that the Special Areas Act and its Amendments had only a minor impact on unemployment in the most severely affected areas of Britain. They point out that fewer than 50,000 jobs were created under this legislation. Further, industrial transfer programmes helped to encourage movement away from depressed areas. Between 1928 and 1937 some 190,000 people were assisted in such transfers. Approximately a quarter returned home later.[7]

The church took very seriously its evangelistic responsibility, launching open air services outside the Blue Anchor public house in the summer of 1932 [8] and planning its own Discipleship Campaign as part of the wider Baptist Union initiative in the autumn of that year. Of the latter, Walter Davis observed: 'We must remember, each one of us, that the aim in this campaign is primarily ourselves. Revival has to start in our own hearts first, and when it has begun there, it will soon reach other lives too.' [9] It will be observed that this clearly echoes the position adopted by the Baptist Union Secretary, M E Aubrey.

Davis was not, however, a narrow-minded thinker. He appears to have had a considerable concern that the church should be aware of the wider happenings in the world about it. For example, as the news of the R101 airship disaster struck home in May 1930 his concern was to call the church to a sober apprehension of the frail nature of life.[10] But Davis did not draw lessons at the expense of the reality of the tragedy. In the magazine he wrote: 'We pay silent homage to our brave fellow-countrymen

who lie in the common grave at Cardington.'[11]

As early as 1931, and despite his apparent feeling of helplessness, Davis was again reflecting the stance of Aubrey as he called upon the church members to consider it their Christian duty to make sacrifices for the sake of the country at large:

'The National Crisis,' he wrote in the October 1931 issue of the magazine, 'has had a good deal of our attention of late. By increased taxation and by a "cut" in wages it has been brought home to all in our country that finance at the moment is not in too healthy a condition. That things are serious we have no doubt, but it must be remembered that in some respects the course that has been taken by the National Government has been precautionary. We have been overspending, and with an excess of imports over exports we are told that we are faced with the prospects of bankruptcy. People of all classes, from the King down to the poorest subject, are called upon to make sacrifices to save the pound. It is perfectly natural that those without faith should be panic-stricken at a time like this, but for those who believe in God it is an opportunity to show fortitude and cheerfulness. "Be still and know that I am God." Let us pray for those and particularly for our Prime Minister, on whom rests the burden of a situation loaded with difficulty.'[12]

In taking this position Davis affords a valuable insight into the local outworking of the Government's policy of deflation, economy and a balanced budget. This attitude must have been a constant theme in discussions in the early Thirties, for as late as 1933 Chamberlain, in his budget speech, announced that Britain was likely to suffer from heavy unemployment for

another ten years.[13] Significantly, by Christmas 1933 the needs in the neighbourhood were very apparent and Davis called upon his members to think of some practical manner in which the needy around the church might be helped. Again writing in the magazine - which he appears to have regarded as a uniquely powerful platform from which to express himself - he commented:

'Despite the improvement in industry there is still abounding sorrow and distress in our land. Christmas cheer will be lacking from many homes unless we take it there. Thus, if there is any lonely home that you and I can brighten by a gift or a word of cheer, may the Star guide us to that place, for by so doing we shall be laying our treasures at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem.'[14]

Interestingly, throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s the church supported the Salmon Lane Mission in Limehouse with parcels of clothing and toys at Christmas.[15] The church choir was also involved in visiting the infirm block at the Croydon workhouse. Teas were provided for the inmates each Christmas.

However, the Croham Road church's desire to see those in need cared for in a practical manner found its chief expression through the Barrow Fund. This was a trust fund established by the one-time Mayor of Croydon, Sir Reuben Barrow. The monies from the fund were to be used specifically for the relief of personal cases of hardship within the borough of Croydon. That there were cases of hardship can be seen from a perusal of the Croydon Board of Guardians' accounts. In 1929 there were 1,580 cases of in-house relief in Croydon and 2,277 in the community. The comparable figures for 1930 were 1,527 and 2,430 respectively. A secondary indication

of financial problems becoming more widespread is seen in the regular one third of a page taken up each week in the *Croydon Advertiser* by advertisements for the services of moneylenders. Throughout the Thirties, the Barrow Fund was to prove the church's main practical means of responding to surrounding poverty. The church deacons were the only ones to know the names of the recipients of gifts from the fund, and even they did not know all of the recipients, some being referred to by Davis only as 'a needy friend.' The yearly total of giving ranged from £15 to £38.

Three particular features emerge from this evidence of the church's giving to individuals in special need. Firstly, the gifts were given in the light of each individual case. Some of the gifts were fairly substantial. £2 was not unusual, and even £5 was given on one occasion. The latter figure was approximately the weekly salary of the minister at the time. Secondly, each year about 20 people received help. That was a large number considering the church's membership of 130 or so, and marks a widespread sense of need. But were the recipients church members or simply part of the community? Although no evidence is available, the former is most likely. Thirdly, the giving was always determined by the level of the gift to the church from the Barrow Fund. That figure was around £15 to £20 per annum - as it remains to this day. Unlike today, the church added little from its general or communion funds.

Turning to the church's stance on the pacifism debate, it is important to note that the Great War had left a lasting impression upon the church - as it had upon most in the kingdom. Armistice time became the focus for a period of reflection not unlike that more usually associated with Lent. Special vigils and evenings of serious thought and prayer remained a feature of the church's life until the late Thirties. Writing of one such

meeting held for the Christian Endeavour group, Walter Davis commented: 'It was evident to us who were present that our Ex-Servicemen, and surely they are the men to speak on these matters, regard all war as un-Christian. We were urged by all the speakers to give our full support to the cause of peace.' [16]

It is important to remember just how strong the remembrance sentiment was at this time. A *Croydon Advertiser* reporter could note in 1931 that the crowds at Croydon cenotaph were larger than ever, and their sense of concern at the need for continuing such ceremonies was unabated. Indeed, David Martin has suggested that for the nation in general, the sacrifices of servicemen in the war of 1914-1918 were regarded as providing a collective salvation through suffering to which the rest of the nation could and should respond by renewed patriotism and dedication. [17] The *Baptist Times* for 7 November 1935, for example, carried a leader entitled, 'Did they die in vain? - A Meditation for Armistice Day.' [18] Here it was argued that Armistice Day should be made sacred to:

'...the remembrance of our heroes and to the advocacy of international peace...We won the war; wars have not yet won the peace...Justice is greater than peace but when all has been said, war remains a blunder when it is not a crime, and our loved ones whose familiar faces are not seen to smile encouragement will not have died in vain if they have contributed to the creation of that new mind in humanity which will make war not only bad form and vulgar but an outrage to be punished.'

Some 5 years later, with hostilities already breaking out in North Africa, Davis kept up this consistent plea: 'Let our fervent prayer be made at

this time for the termination of hostilities between Italy and Abyssinia.'[19]

Davis' successor at Croham Road, the Rev Stanley Dewhurst, another student of Spurgeon's College, was called to the pastorate in March/April 1936.[20] Dewhurst did not place the same emphasis upon Armistice-tide, although it continued to be observed, of course, for what Baptist minister could afford to neglect it entirely from the church's calendar? Whilst ex-servicemen still took part in the special services (reading the lessons and taking the offertory, for example),[21] Dewhurst's concern appears to have lain more with trying to convey to his congregation the need to work out those issues which were of direct and relevant concern to them in their everyday living. This is perhaps best illustrated by the observation that the October 1935 magazine announced a new series of sermons from passages in the Book of Acts. Familiar stories were given catchy and striking titles bearing in mind the news of the day: Acts 8 verses 26 to 40: "The Abyssinian Question;" Acts 10: "Italian Quest".

The Croham Road church appears to have had an ambiguous relationship with the temperance movement. It certainly did not adopt a campaigning stance on the issue. At the Annual General Meeting of the church in January 1930 a report was brought reviewing the work of the Croydon United Temperance Council. Later in the year Temperance Sunday was announced as 31 September. At the same meeting an appeal for hospitality was made on behalf of the Temperance Convention whose delegates were assembling in Croydon over the same weekend. Yet strangely, for some years in the early Thirties, the church was unable to find a suitable volunteer to serve on the Croydon United Temperance Council. A representative was not finally appointed until 1935.[22]

There are two possible explanations for Croham Road's apparently ambivalent attitude towards temperance. It might have been assumed that temperance was normative for an evangelical Baptist and that there would be little point in pressing the issue home constantly. On the other hand this non-campaigning attitude might also have been because, for the church, temperance had ceased to be a prescribed doctrine - if indeed it ever had been. It is pertinent to ask whether the church had already begun to feel that there were more important issues needing its attention?

So far as the Croham Road church was concerned the major issue which did arise in April 1932 was the debate about the Sunday opening of cinemas. As Chapter 8 of this thesis has demonstrated, this had, in fact, already been continuing for at least two years prior to this date. In the Croham Road context the debate was prompted by a letter from the Croydon and District Free Church Council which was read at the April Deacons' meeting.^[23] Later that month the matter was shared with the Church Meeting. That meeting approved the proposal: 'That it is our wish that the Free Church Federal Council shall oppose the Sunday opening of cinemas in any form.'^[24] This was a potentially explosive issue because, as we have already seen, the then Bishop of Croydon had publicly declared that he saw no harm in such opening. The June 1932 Church Meeting followed up the matter in similar tone.^[25] Then in the early autumn of that year the Church Meeting was informed of the work of the Keep Your Sunday Association. It was agreed that literature on the matter should be distributed in the neighbourhood. However, a proposal to convene a special meeting to organise support for the campaign was lost.^[26]

The issue did not appear on the agenda again until January 1933. At the Annual General meeting that month Mr Higerty, the husband of one of the church's two lady deacons, proposed: 'That we as Christians pledge

ourselves never to enter a cinema.' The deacons, however, felt that cinema attendance was a matter of conscience, for individual and personal decision. They opposed the motion, therefore, and it failed. The deacons announced that if anyone felt strongly on the issue they should speak to Mr Higerty with a view to bringing a concrete suggestion to the deacons.[27] No such suggestion appears to have been brought. The way in which the deacons managed to keep the church as such from committing itself overtly on this issue is really quite remarkable considering the strength of general Nonconformist feeling in the debate. They were clearly led and supported in their stand by Stanley Dewhurst who took the line that Sunday cinema was the lesser of two evils. It was better for young people to be in a cinema on Sunday evenings than simply wandering the streets.

Moving to the question of building work, the original church building at Croham Road was rather derisively known as a 'tin tabernacle.' Constructed originally as a temporary home for the church, financial restrictions had precluded the erection of a more substantial replacement. Walter Davis was committed to the building of a more permanent structure from his earliest days at Croham Road - he later did the same at two other churches. In September 1932 he informed the readership of the church magazine that: 'I have resolved not to seek another pastorate for five years but to remain and erect a permanent building.'[28] In response to this the church pledged itself to its pastor.[29] Excitement in the church grew as for 1933 the theme chosen was declared to be 'Let us rise up and build,' Nehemiah 2 verse 18.[30] Nine months later a Special Church Meeting resolved upon the erection of a new building in the light of '...alteration which was taking place in the district, owing to the influx

of population.'[31] Work on the new building began later that year - the architect and builders all being Freemasons. In May the magazine reported the stonelaying ceremony. It also informed the membership and friends of the church that the new building would be opened by Ernest Brown MP, Minister of State for Mines and well-known Baptist lay-preacher.[32]

Sadly, everything did not go well in the building project. A dispute arose over the decision of the Building Committee to vote expenses to a Messrs Baines for their part in drawing up preliminary building plans. The church treasurer, Mr Childs, opposed this decision. Being outvoted on the Building Committee he expressed to the deacons his concern that the Building Committee's decision amounted to a vote of no-confidence in him. The deacons did not discuss the committee's decision (presumably feeling that it was outside their brief to do so). However, they passed a unanimous vote of confidence in the treasurer.[33] Evidence indicates that tensions present on this occasion were but symptomatic of a general tension between Walter Davis and some members of the diaconate. On several occasions it came to a head with clashes on financial matters between Davis and Childs. Three deacons had resigned as early as December 1930, although there is some dispute about their reasons for so doing. It may have been over the membership of Davis and others in the Freemasons,[34] or because of his reputedly overbearing manner.[35]

Matters came to a head, however, in the spring of 1934. In February of that year the normal monthly Deacons' Meeting was followed by a special meeting in the pastor's absence. It was resolved to make application to the Baptist Union Sustentation Fund for a grant of £25 per annum. This along with a £25 increase in his stipend would bring the newly-married pastor's salary up to the Baptist Union recommended minimum of £250 per annum. It was further proposed that if at all possible the grant should be

foregone after just one quarter. Finally, it was resolved that a copy of these resolutions should be forwarded to the pastor prior to the next Church Members' Meeting. All three resolutions were carried unanimously on the proposal of the treasurer.^[36] At the March Deacons' Meeting the pastor expressed his keen disappointment at not having his stipend increased to £250 per annum as from 1st January 1934 on account of the heavy expenses which he would incur during the early months of his married life. It was explained that the application for a grant from the Sustentation Fund was being made at his request and that by the rules of the Fund it would have been:

'...impossible to make the application if his stipend had been increased to £250 as from 1st June next. The Pastor said he did not wish the application to go in as in the course of a short time the church would go so far ahead as to render such assistance unnecessary...Some doubt was expressed as to the right the diaconate had of not letting the application go forward as the authority of the members of the Church had been obtained for it. The Pastor then withdrew his objection.'^[37]

All was not settled, however. For in the November Deacons' Meeting: 'A spirited discussion took place between the Pastor and Treasurer as to the refusal by the latter to stand at the Communion Table for the Dedicatory Prayer after the taking of the collection at the Missionary Sale of Work on the previous Wednesday.'^[38] Both parties finished up rebuked, Mr Childs for making such an issue of the matter, and the Pastor for not seeking private settlement of the dispute. Mr Childs resigned from the diaconate later that month.^[39] His resignation was received with

considerable regret and the Church Meeting put on record its 'high appreciation of his untiring efforts for the extension of the Kingdom of God.' One year later Walter Davis resigned.[40]

The question of buildings arose again in 1935. At this time two newly-built houses adjoining the church came on the market. After very careful consideration it was concluded that the church finances would not sustain this additional strain.[41] Clearly the church was having very real problems meeting all of the demands upon its premises for in 1938 the Church Meeting resolved to build new halls by the year 1943.[42] In one of those strange twists of fate (providence!) the buildings were erected before 1943. But they were, in fact, air-raid shelters erected by the local Council. In the early 1950s these were converted into most serviceable and very resilient halls.

Throughout the 1930s the church was bedevilled by financial stringency, as a brief summary of the balance sheet shows:

Quarter/Year:	Balance:
1931 (end of year A/C)	+ £ 1/03/07
1933 (end 2nd ~)	- £28/05/11
1934 (end 1st ~)	- £14/00/02
1934 (end 2nd ~)	- £51/06/04
1935 (end 2nd ~)	- £46/19/-
1935 (end 3rd ~)	- £62/19/06
1936 (end 1st ~)	- £22/08/02
1936 (end 2nd ~)	- £15/16/11
1936 (end 3rd ~)	- £11/03/00
1937 (end 1st ~)	- £32/15/11
1937 (end 2nd ~)	- £24/00/09
1937 (end 3rd ~)	- £53/13/07
1938 (end 1st ~)	+ £14/03/08
1938 (end 2nd ~)	+ £ 6/16/08
1938 (end 3rd ~)	>+ £10 (estimate)
1938 (end of year)	+ £ 9/18/0
1939 (end 1st ~)	- £ 9/01/04
1939 (end 2nd ~)	+ £21/04/09
1939 (end 3rd ~)	- £43/14/07[43]

The decade opened with a balance of £160 set aside for the new building.^[44] It was this fund which received most attention for the next few years.^[45] But by the end of 1931 financial constraints were so serious that the pastor offered to take a reduction in his stipend. This the deacons refused to let him do.^[46] The seriousness of the situation must have struck home to people for within a few months giving had increased noticeably.^[47] Many ways of saving money were considered by the church's leaders. The hall of the Shirley Mission^[48], which had been closely linked with Croham Road for some years, needed extensive repair work performed. It was agreed that the church could not underwrite the £15 to £20 needed for this purpose.^[49] A month later it was agreed that the church societies should be asked to contribute to the heating and lighting of the church premises.^[50] The organ tuner was approached with a request that he lower his costs.^[51] This he did,^[52] but his reduced rate was still considered too high for in September 1932 the work was taken on by a new tuner specifically because this latter tuner was prepared to charge less.^[53] The pulpit supply for the pastor's holiday was covered by lay-preachers in 1933 instead of the more usual guest ministers. Almost certainly this was because lay-preachers commanded a travelling expenses-only fee.^[54] Every possible means of reducing outgoings was considered.

A joint appeal with Days Lane Baptist Church, Sidcup, in 1935 raised £185/19/-, but even this did not solve the problem completely.^[55] Within a year and a half economies were again being called for.^[56] The church treasurer informed the deacons in February 1937 that: 'the church was not making as much headway with regard to the repayment of loans as had been hoped. During 1935 £180 and during 1936 £183 had been raised against the £250 required each year.'^[57] At the next Deacons' Meeting the pastor, Stanley Dewhurst, expressed a willingness to take a reduced stipend. The

suggestion was unanimously rejected by the deacons.[58]

By the end of 1937 the problems had become so severe that a visit by Seymour Price, Secretary of the Property Board, proved both necessary and of some assistance.[59] However, a loan of £50 had to be taken from the London Baptist Property Board in April 1938 in order to service the March instalment of the loan outstanding from the Baptist Building Fund.[60] Repayment arrangements to both trusts were renegotiated that month also.[61] The church's somewhat desperate plight was only alleviated by a £200 gift from the London Baptist Association Jubilee Fund a month later.[62]

As a result of this persistent financial stringency the church had to be very careful and selective in its response to outside appeals throughout the Thirties. Early in 1930 the Friends' Coalfields Distress Committee[63] appeal reached the church. Members were advised that personal gifts would be forwarded to the fund. £61/10/- was eventually sent.[64] This appeal was promoted very widely in Croydon through the letters columns of the *Croydon Advertiser*. Response was generally very good.[65] As has already been seen, the Friends were also positive in their approach to the problems of unemployment in Croydon. In November 1931 they opened a reading room for the unemployed on their own premises in Park Lane.[66]

In 1932 appeals from Rev A G Adams of Berger Hall Central Church and Medical Mission of Bromley[67], and Bethel Baptist Church, Glyncoorney, Glamorgan[68] were both rejected. Correspondence from the Pit Ponies Protection Society was discussed at some length by the deacons. With one dissentient the deacons agreed to take no action.[69] Similarly, Mornmouth and South Wales Ministers' Superannuation Fund appeal was also rejected.[70] During 1933 Dagenham Baptist Church failed to persuade the deacons of the rightness of its appeal.[71] East Sheen Baptist Church's

appeal was refused on the grounds that the church was already in receipt of aid from the Pioneer Mission.[72] In March 1934 an appeal for Stratton Green Baptist Church was refused.[73] The Essex Baptist Association appealed unsuccessfully on behalf of Dagenham Baptist Church and Spurgeon's Centenary Fund.[74]

As the church's financial plight deepened in 1936, appeals from the British Empire Cancer Campaign,[75] Free Church Memorial to King George V,[76] British Empire Cancer Campaign,[77] King George Memorial Fund, Evangelical Tract Society, Imperial Alliance for the Defence of Sunday, London Baptist Association Evangelistic Committee,[78] Plumstead Baptist Church, Baptist World Alliance and the Baptist Colonial Society[79] were all rejected. Similarly, appeals from the Deputies of the Protestant Dissenters,[80] London Baptist Association Evangelistic Committee, Selsdon Baptist Free Church,[81] the Baptist Missionary Society deficit appeal,[82] Baptist Union Sustentation Fund[83] and the Baptist Continental Fund under the sponsorship of Dr Ewing[84] were also rejected, as were further appeals, amongst them the Baptist Missionary Society, Croydon General Hospital, Baptist Colonial Society,[85] the Croydon Centre for the Unemployed,[86] the London Federation of Peace Councils, Croydon and District United Peace Council[87] and London Baptist Association Presidents' Fund.[88] In 1939, the deacons decided not to recognise Dominion Sunday on behalf of the Baptist Colonial Society.[89]

Despite this long catalogue of rejected appeals, however, throughout the Thirties the deacons of the Croham Road church continued to authorise the sending of gifts to many and various charitable bodies. Early in 1932, a retiring offering was taken for the Croydon Nursing Services[90] and for the Baptist Union Sustentation Fund.[91] The sum of 5 gns. was sent to the Croydon Occupational Centre for the Unemployed. This was despite the

concern raised by Mr Higerty, a local shoe-shop owner, that: 'the men were being taught trades the following of which in their spare time will tend to cause unemployment in these trades.'^[92] A gift of 10/- was also sent to the Evangelisation Society.^[93]

In the spring of 1933 Belmont Free Church, Kenton, was sent a gift of £1.^[94] It was originally felt that the Mitcham Chemical Factory Explosion Appeal was a worthy cause for the church to support.^[95] However, consultation with the Relieving Officer, the Superintendent of Police, a Rate Collector and a Justice of the Peace elicited the information that over £1,000 had been subscribed for the assistance of the victims of the explosion and that so much clothing had been received that some had been returned to the donors: 'It was agreed that no form of assistance be given.'^[96]

1936 saw gifts sent to Croydon Centre for the Unemployed (£1) and Croydon and District Free Church Council (10/6).^[97] For the 1937 Baptist Union Sustentation Fund an open appeal was made. Croydon General Hospital^[98] received the communion service offering made up to a minimum of 1 gn.^[99] Also in 1937 Croydon Council of Social Services was sent 1/2 gn; Croydon Centre for the Unemployed, 1 gn, and Croydon Free Church Federal Council, 1 gn.^[100] The Royal Surgical Aid Society also received 1/2 gn.^[101]

It should be remembered that the London Baptist Association's gift came to the church in April 1938. In June the church duly gave a communion service offering to the London Baptist Association Aid Fund with a guarantee of 1 gn.^[102] In January 1939 a donation of 1 gn was again sent to Croydon Unemployed Centre.^[103] It was agreed to hold retiring offerings at both services on 26 February for the Croydon General Hospital.^[104] It was agreed to allow the Salvation Army to hold a Self-

Denial Collection on 12 March.[105] Half a guinea was sent to the Rev Carey Bonner Memorial Fund.[106]

From the detailed information above a number of conclusions may be drawn about the basis on which the Croham Road Baptist Church made gifts to charitable concerns during the 1930s. Firstly, it is apparent that many charitable bodies were under the most severe financial constraints at the period of this study. Secondly, almost without exception the appeals made to the church were genuine. Yet the deacons felt it their duty to allow only those appeals which would carry the favour of the church membership and which would serve a clearly defined purpose. Thirdly, and most significantly, local charities benefited more obviously than others. Moreover, those involved in the medical field and in the alleviation of some of the more apparent evils of unemployment were high on the deacons' list of priorities. Fourthly, despite ever-deepening problems in the church's own financial position, it was still felt strongly by the deacons that monies had to be distributed beyond the church compass. Charity was an essential part of the church's thinking.

The pages of the church literature contain few references to wider national affairs. Those which are included are thus important simply because they made sufficient impact to make their recording necessary and relevant. These issues can be described under three headings, 'The Royal Family,' 'The German Crisis' and 'Outbreak of War.'

Nothing was recorded about the Royal Family until the death of King George V. At the Church Meeting in January 1936 prayers were read with a special bearing on his decease.[107] The magazine a month later recorded the king's death and sought prayer for the new king.[108] In the May 1937 edition of the magazine the coronation was noted and Walter Davis called

for a good attendance at the United Free Church Coronation Service in Croydon to represent: '...[the] loyalty of Free Church people. Let this be a demonstration that, although Free Churchmen as such are omitted from the Coronation Service, yet we do desire to commend our new King to God as he enters upon the responsibilities of his high office.'[109] Highly significantly, no reference can be found in any church documents to the abdication crisis.

Little was reported in the church papers about the growing storm of unrest on the Continent, but one reference which was made gives the clue to an underlying concern that was felt by British Baptists for their peers in Germany. In the December 1938 edition of the magazine Stanley Dewhurst reported that:

'Non-Aryan Children of Christian homes in Germany have a special claim on our sympathy and help. Outcasts in their own schools, unable to look for assistance to their distressed parents, of secondary interest to Jewish communities in England, who are helping their co-religionists splendidly, efforts are being made to provide some of them with education in an English school, and training with a view to settlement in some other country, probably out of Europe. Croydon's own Inter-Aid Committee for this purpose, with support from Anglican and Free Churches, appeal earnestly for help from any who can receive a child into their home, or send a donation.'

This affords an interesting insight into both the concerns expressed by Dewhurst and the degree of ecumenical assumption which was already being made. No narrow appeal to a denominational fund would do, it seems; far better to give to local ecumenical projects. The only other reference to

German Christians is to be found in the fact that in May and June 1939 the German pastor, Adolph Blumit, spoke at the church.[110]

The actual outbreak of war proved a considerable surprise to the church. Rather inappropriately the August 1939 magazine carried an article calling the church to pray for an evangelistic campaign planned for later that year. The preparations were described as 'a preliminary Council of War.'[111] The incongruity of the statement lies in the fact that the article would have been written well before the summer holidays in order to allow sufficient time for the copy to be printed. For similar reasons the magazine can be forgiven for carrying the statement the next month that: '...the month of September marks a fresh settling down to the main tasks of our Church life once more, and the routine submission of one's energies to the demands of routine.'[112] But by October 1939 the full immensity of the upheaval facing the churches was beginning to strike home. The ladies were called upon to knit blankets for the British Red Cross Society. The congregation were also asked to note carefully 'A Message to the Churches' from the Rev Melville Evans (President) and the Rev Henry Cook (Secretary) of the London Baptist Association:

'The War has greatly affected our work. Let us, however, remember that our work is of God, and we must not jeopardise its value by cowardice or failure. Our work may need to change its character, and we may be called to make great sacrifices. But we must think of the multitudes around us in need of the ministry that only the Church can give them, and we must seek to be loyal to the vocation wherewith we are called...'[113]

Adjustments were being made to the church's programme, in particular to

the times of meetings. But gaps in the congregation were soon noticeable for reasons of enlistment and of a lack of confidence in leaving home unnecessarily.[114]

On the basis of this survey of the records of Croham Road Baptist Church in the 1930s, it may be concluded that in theological outlook, the church was solidly evangelical throughout this period of its history. Indeed, it reflected characteristics which indicate its sympathies with the Keswick Movement. Not least was a strong commitment to teaching on Christian holiness and a tendency towards apoliticalism. These characteristics were reflected in two notable ways. Firstly, in practice the church had a strongly spiritual and evangelistic emphasis, although how effective the church's evangelistic programme was remains debatable. In fact, additions to the membership came about almost exclusively as the result of people moving into the area. Secondly, the church had little time for engagement in the great social debates of the day such as the older issues of temperance and Sunday observance, the latter reflected in newer form as the Sunday cinema debate, or the more pertinent debates surrounding the slump. On the issues of temperance and the Sunday opening of cinemas the church was clearly in sympathy with the conservative viewpoint, but carefully steered clear of making public pronouncements on the issues. As well as having a theological basis for these stances, it is also clear that a certain tolerance had become a hallmark of the Croham Road Baptist Church by the Thirties. Additionally, the church's practical social commitment tended to be 'in house,' or at least 'in Croydon.' The church clearly had financial constraints of its own, and it was, therefore, thought wise to give only to those charities and causes with which its members could the more readily identify. One may also suggest that

theological criteria were also important factors in the decision-making process. The church's - or at least, the leadership's - theological understanding was a key factor in its 'world-view.'

Again, what political sympathy may be discerned from the church records indicates that the church found itself broadly in sympathy with the National government, the minister during the early Thirties - Walter Davies - stressing the need to adhere to the government's deflationary strategy. No mention is made of the two most significant political events of the Thirties - so far as this thesis is concerned - the 1931 General Election and the 1935 launch of the Council of Action. Similarly, the debate over pacifism barely warranted a mention. What loosely pacifist sympathies the church did possess were focussed on the annual Armistice-tide observances, and clearly reflect an acceptance of the necessity of war in certain circumstances. Also, what little reference is to be found to developments on the Continent (not even Munich is mentioned), may, with very little effort, be construed as preparing the church for a future, necessary step to be taken by Britain in defence of the weak in Germany. Pacificism appears to have been the accepted position within the church membership at this time.

Finally, and significantly, the church had various ecumenical contacts with other churches, but these were almost exclusively on the basis of a shared evangelicalism. In the following chapter we shall consider how this pattern of local church life compared with that of its near neighbour, Brighton Road Baptist Church, South Croydon, in the 1930s.^[115]

Footnotes to Chapter 9:

1. See Stockwell, *The Baptist Churches of Surrey*, pp 71ff. See also the *Historical Account of this Church*, which covers the period 9 January 1893 to 2 November 1898, church archives.
2. Douglas G Browne and E V Tullett, *Bernard Spilsbury: His Life and Cases* (London, 1976), p 250.

3. Tomkins, *Life of Edward Woods*, p 36.
4. *The Magazine of Croham Road Baptist Church*, March 1930. In subsequent references this is simply termed *Magazine*. The various church archives were never numbered. In this thesis they are therefore referred to by date alone. They are kept at the church premises at the present time. On Keswick, cf Glegg, *Four Score...And More*, pp 34f, 53, 56ff, 87f.
5. *Magazine*, December 1932.
6. cf Stevenson, *British Society, 1914-45*, pp 33f, 131f.
7. Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, pp 65f.
8. *Magazine*, July 1932.
9. *Magazine*, August 1932.
10. For details of other civic remembrance services see: *Croydon Advertiser*, 11/10/30 pp 7ff.
11. *Magazine*, May 1930.
12. *Magazine*, October 1931. cf p 102 of this thesis.
13. Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, pp 62f.
14. *Magazine*, December 1933.
15. Mrs Doris Shergold, personal recollections, April 1990.
16. *Magazine*, December 1930.
17. David Martin, *A Sociology of English religion*, p 74.
18. *Baptist Times*, 7/11/35 pp 805f.
19. *Magazine*, November 1935.
20. Deacons, 13/3/36; *Magazine*, June 1936.
21. Deacons, 22/11/36.
22. Deacons, 8/2/35.
23. Deacons, 29/4/32. For details of the constitution of the Croydon Free Church Council, see: *Ward's Croydon Directory*, 1937, LXXIII, *Croydon Advertiser*
24. Church, 21/4/32.
25. Church, 30/6/32.
26. Church, 26/10/32.
27. Church, 25/1/33.
28. *Magazine*, September 1932.
29. Church, 26/10/32.
30. *Magazine*, January 1933.
31. Church, 29/9/33.
32. *Magazine*, June 1934.
33. Deacons, 8/12/33.
34. The late Miss Gladys Jeffery, personal recollections.
35. Mrs Doris Shergold, personal recollections.
36. *Special Deacons*, 26/2/34.
37. Deacons, 9/3/34.
38. Deacons, 16/11/34.
39. *ibid*.
40. Deacons, 14/12/35.
41. Church, 4/1/35.
42. Deacons, 13/5/38.
43. Deacons, 15/1/32; 27/7/33; 20/7/34; 19/10/34; 13/9/35; 11/10/35; 24/4/36; 10/7/36; 9/10/36; 9/4/37; 9/7/37; 8/10/37; 22/4/38; 8/7/38; 11/11/38; 20/1/39; 14/4/39; 9/6/39.
44. *Magazine*, February 1930.
45. See, for example: *Magazine*, January 1931.
46. Church, 17/1/31.
47. *Magazine*, May 1932
48. See: Stockwell, *The Baptists of Surrey*, pp 74f.
49. Deacons, 15/1/32.
50. Deacons, 26/2/32.

51. *ibid.*
52. Deacons, 1/4/32.
53. Deacons, 29/7/32 & 14/10/32.
54. Deacons, 31/3/33.
55. Deacons, 13/9/35.
56. Deacons, 12/3/37.
57. Deacons, 12/2/37.
58. Deacons, 12/3/37.
59. Deacons, 11/2/38.
60. Deacons, 22/4/38.
61. *ibid.*
62. Special Deacons, 22/5/38.
63. Church, 29/5/30.
64. *Magazine*, May 1930.
65. See for example, *Croydon Advertiser*, 15/2/30; 22/2/30.
66. *Croydon Advertiser*, 21/11/31 p 16.
67. Deacons, 26/2/32.
68. Deacons, 1/4/32.
69. Deacons, 10/6/32.
70. Deacons, 14/10/32.
71. Deacons, 8/9/33.
72. Deacons, 10/11/33.
73. Deacons, 9/3/34.
74. Deacons, 20/7/34.
75. Deacons, 13/3/36.
76. *ibid.*
77. Deacons, 26/6/36.
78. Deacons, 30/10/36.
79. Deacons, 13/11/36.
80. Deacons, 12/3/37.
81. Deacons, 9/4/37.
82. Deacons, 11/6/37.
83. Deacons, 19/11/37.
84. Deacons, 10/12/37.
85. Deacons, 11/2/38. On Croydon General Hospital, see also, Dr Bookless' lecture: *Some Incidents in Croydon's Medical History*, p 3. [Private correspondence]
86. Deacons, 11/3/38.
87. Deacons, 13/5/38.
88. Deacons, 11/11/38.
89. Deacons, 20/1/39.
90. *Ward's Croydon Directory*, 1937, XXIII, *Croydon Advertiser*.
91. Deacons, 26/2/32.
92. Church, 26/10/32.
93. Deacons, 14/10/32.
94. Deacons, 31/3/33.
95. *Croydon Advertiser*, 1/4/33 p 13.
96. Deacons, 30/6/33.
97. Deacons, 13/3/36.
98. See: *Ward's Croydon Directory*, 1937, XIX, *Croydon Advertiser*.
99. Deacons, 12/2/37.
100. Deacons, 9/4/37.
101. Deacons, 19/11/37.
102. Deacons, 17/6/38.
103. Deacons, 20/1/39.
104. *ibid*
105. Special Deacons, 27/1/39.

106. Deacons, 10/2/39.
107. Church, 24/1/36.
108. *Magazine*, February 1936.
109. *Magazine*, May 1937.
110. Deacons, 14/4/39.
111. *Magazine*, August 1939.
112. *Magazine*, September 1939.
113. *Magazine*, October 1939.
114. *Magazine*, November 1939.
115. Sadly, the minutes of Church Members' Meetings are not available for February to December 1939.

Chapter 10

South Croydon: Brighton Road Baptist Church

The Brighton Road Baptist Church was constituted on 10 September 1894.^[1] Its story, however, goes back to around 1869. At that time a Mr William Pressey, 'a humble-minded shepherd,' and his wife became deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of their neighbours. A Sunday school was started in their home. At about the same time, members of the Watney brewery family had begun holding services in a local cottage. A London City Mission missionary, Mr Johnson, who had been engaged to visit the district, was also holding Sunday services in the Shepherd's Stables in South Croydon.^[2] A number of people joined this group - most of them having no previous church affiliation. Eventually, a Sunday school was commenced, and this soon had classes for all ages, from children up to adults.

The next stage in the church's development was the erection of an iron building in what is now Purley Downs Road - this became known as the Brighton Road Mission. On its removal to the corner of Crunden Road it soon became known as the Brighton Road Chapel. Walter Schwind took charge of the mission hall/chapel in 1875, and very soon a full range of Sunday services was in hand. He remained at the Mission for 16 years, during which a steady growth in numbers was experienced. During these years the Watney sisters underwrote the work financially. By the early 1890s it was apparent that the numbers attending the mission warranted the formation of an autonomous church. Previously, all converts had been baptised by James Spurgeon at the West Croydon Baptist Tabernacle: '...it became increasingly clear that there was a strong group of those who were of a

Baptist persuasion.'^[3] In 1894 a meeting was held at which the Baptist Church was formed. It had 100 original members. At this time Miss Rebecca Watney handed over the Deed of Gift conveying the ground and building to be kept in trust by the Baptist denomination.

The first minister was the Rev R E Chettleborough, who remained at the church for three years. In 1897 the Rev H J Milledge, minister of Gamlingay Baptist Church, Cambridgeshire, took on the pastorate in which he continued until his death in 1913. In the early days of his ministry the numbers continued to grow, the first diaconate was formed and the church affiliated with the Baptist Union.^[4] Through the generosity of the Watney sisters a stone building was erected in place of the iron hall in 1901, and a pipe organ was installed two years later. During the ministry of the former Strict Baptist, the Rev H G Doel,^[5] which commenced in 1914, the church continued to grow despite the difficulties of the war years. Having served as an army chaplain, 1917-1918, Doel resigned the pastorate on his return from war service. Another short pastorate followed, that of the Rev James Sutherland, 1919 to 1922.

In 1923 the Rev Hugh F Cross became minister. Having served pastorates in Wedmore and Tewkesbury, Cross had seen war service with the YMCA from 1916 to 1918. His greatest work at Brighton Road was amongst the young people. During his time at the church numbers increased still further and new halls were erected. Yet at the Church Meeting in April 1930 it was reported that during 1929 the Sunday school numbers fell by 28.^[6] This fall in the roll of Sunday school scholars was, in fact, part of an already established pattern. Significantly, this report stimulated considerable study and debate within the church fellowship. At the Church Members' Meeting held on 28 July 1930 reference was made to this matter.^[7] A committee had already been set up to seek answers to the

problem. Hugh Cross went on to say that: '...it was more of an experiment to see what could be done to increase attendance at the Sunday School.' At the September 1930 Church Meeting the Sunday School Visitation Committee reported that: '...there was very little if anything being done by any of the Churches in the town as far as he could find out.' [8] In fact, the wider plight of Croydon's Sunday schools arose again at the Church Meeting a month later. In reply to a question from a Mr Latreille it was stated that: '...up to the present practically nothing was being done but the Rev Martin of Emmanuel Church was hoping to be able to do something in the spring but could do nothing at present.' [9]

Despite these problems in the Sunday school, at the first Church Meeting of the decade on 22 January 1930, seven new members were welcomed into the fellowship. [10] At the same meeting, visitors were appointed to interview eleven more prospective members. New members were added at almost every Church Meeting held in 1930. In an effort to sustain growth, the church regularly planned evangelistic campaigns. The question of a youth campaign arose in July 1930. Interestingly, this also led to a debate about the effectiveness of special campaigns and missions in general: '...during the discussion it was queried whether after all the trouble that had to be taken over these different agencies and fresh meetings was done, did it really amount to much or was anything actually accomplished.' [11] After various consultations it was agreed to hold such a campaign from 19 to 29 October 1930. The Croham Road and Purley Baptist Churches were also to be involved. [12] The mission appears to have passed without making a significant impact on the church, so that, when, at the end of 1930, the church carried out a thorough revision of its membership roll some thirty-three members had their names deleted. [13]

The Church Members were stunned to hear the resignation of Hugh Cross on

14 January 1931 in order to take on the pastoral care of the newly-formed Selsdon Baptist Church less than two miles away.[14] Not surprisingly, most of the subsequent Church Meetings were preoccupied with matters relating to the pastorate. The new pastor, Harry Spelman of Malden, commenced his ministry on 1 November 1931. When Spelman came to the church there remained a good number of committed people. Trained as he was under Thomas Spurgeon in Dublin, Spelman was concerned to see change towards a more fully conservative evangelical position. One of his first acts, and one of the most controversial, was to move the church away from sales of work as a major form of fund-raising to an annual Thank-Offering Day.

1931 began with additions to the membership being equalled by deletions.[15] At a Deacons' Meeting held on 14 April 1931 it was reported that the Free Churches and Anglican churches in Croydon were arranging for a Mission from 20 to 27 September of that year. Brighton Road decided to be involved in this in some small way,[16] and in June the deacons also gave formal approval for the church's involvement in a Young Life Campaign in the autumn of that year.[17] This was to run from 10 to 16 October, with services each evening and three services on the Sunday. Whilst these plans for mission were continuing, August[18] and September 1931[19] again saw deletions and transfers from the church exceeding the numbers joining. Significantly, as a result of the Young Life Week four young people applied for baptism, and two of them for church membership also.[20] Nine members were added to the church at the December 1931 Church Meeting.[21] This positive balance in membership continued steadily throughout 1932.[22]

A major re-organisation of the children's and youth work took place during 1932.[23] Special youth services were introduced once a month, the church sanctuary was used for extra Sunday school classes, and training

classes were arranged for the teachers. Most radically, the proposal was made to give occasional evening services a flavour appealing to young people.[24] Additionally, the church was also firmly committed in principle to the Baptist Union Discipleship Campaign.[25]

1933 opened with 2 members being removed from the membership of the church and 10 being added.[26] March saw one added and four erased.[27] In April another 4 joined the church.[28] Also in January 1933 a committee set up to consider how best the youth-orientated services could be arranged reported back to the Church Meeting. It was agreed that pew-cards should remain in place during these special services. There was no objection to young men assisting the pastor in the pulpit, but a decision on the involvement of women was deferred for three months.[29] These special services continued throughout the 1930s.[30] Yet all was not plain sailing, for at the Deacons' Meeting held on 14 March 1933 the pastor: '...drew attention to certain matters [unrecorded] which had arisen in connection with these services, and stressed the need for loyal support for all that was being done for the young people, especially in regard to the Discipleship Campaign plans.'[31] In May 1933 the Discipleship Campaign committee reported to the deacons on the advertising which they had undertaken for the special monthly youth services. These special services were seen as an integral part of the church's involvement in the campaign.[32]

In the early summer of 1934 the possibility of conducting open air services in the nearby South Croydon recreation ground was mooted by Spelman. The suggestion was, however, deferred on the grounds that: '...it would be better to endeavour to arrange the service jointly with other local churches.'[33] Interestingly, during 1935 the young people of the church went ahead with their own plans for open air services. These were

held in Katherine Street, in the heart of Croydon, and in the church's own recreation ground.[34] Further dissent linked to arrested growth arose in the autumn of 1934 with a serious debate over the deacons' manner of dealing with those members who had ceased attending on a regular basis. On behalf of the diaconate the church secretary, Mr Rouse, brought a proposal to the September Church Meeting regarding non-attending members.[35] Heated discussion followed, and various amendments were presented, but eventually the discussion was adjourned to the next Church Meeting.[36] At that subsequent meeting a final resolution, passed by 29 votes to 12, stated that:

'...a member absenting himself or herself from church attendance and communion without reasonable cause for more than six months consecutively shall, on a motion taken at the next following Church Meeting, be transferred to Associate Membership, and notice thereof shall be posted to the member's last known address. Associate Membership to preclude voting at church business meetings, and to entail automatic lapsing of church membership at the expiration of six months from the date of transfer, and the consequent removal of such member's name from the church roll unless the member has meanwhile resumed attendance.'[37]

In fact, this rule was rescinded in 1939 because it had never been observed and 'it was not proposed to make any definite rule for the future...'[38] The church membership stood at 247 in October 1934 which comes as quite a surprise if one considers how few members regularly attended church meetings. Not surprisingly, therefore, the issue of the nature of church membership came to a head once again in the Church

Meeting of 23 September 1935. Following a tedious discussion in which the deacons' recommendation to remove a lapsed member's name from the church roll had been overturned by the members, Spelman spoke forcefully on the issue: 'The Pastor thought the present was an opportune time for him to say how much he deplored the loose manner in which many Church members held their Membership but trusted that we should not get repetitions of continued absence from Worship without reasons being submitted.'

[39]

At the Church Meeting held on 25 March 1935 it was agreed that the church should go ahead with a mission from 8 to 12 December 1935.[40] The date was later changed to 1 to 4 December.[41] The speaker at the final meeting was to be the Rev E V Whittle of West Croydon Baptist Church.[42] The pastor also suggested that the Rev J N Britton should address the Christian Endeavour societies on 5 December.[43]

The church involved itself in the Baptist Forward Movement, the successor to the Discipleship Campaign. Acceptance of this new strategy was not without its problems as the Church Meeting minutes for March 1936 record. The chief objection seems to have been that extra evangelistic efforts tended to detract from the church's ongoing work.[44] Ironically, however, the church's financial difficulties became evident in this very commitment to the Forward Movement. In the Church Meeting held on 20 July 1936 the church secretary drew attention to the effect the financial provisions of the scheme would have upon the church. In fact, as early as 1932 the church had had to cut back its outreach programme for financial reasons.[45]

As part of the Forward Movement the London Baptist Association called in the autumn of 1936 for its constituent churches to involve themselves in a united capital-wide evangelistic campaign. Two of the deacons, Messrs Wardley and Buttfield, were already involved on the central planning

committee. It was decided that the most suitable initiative would be to organise a weekend retreat or conference from a Friday to the following Monday.^[46] This idea evolved into a weekend planned for 13 to 15 February 1937 conducted by a team of businessmen.^[47] In March 1937 the deacons and pastor met with Mr Angell, the East Surrey Group's Commissioner for the Forward Movement. After lengthy discussion it was decided that Brighton Road's contribution should be via support of the Initial Pastorate Fund.^[48] A final decision was, however, deferred to a later Special Deacons' Meeting. At the next Deacons' Meeting it was decided that it should be recommended that the church guarantee £25 as a contribution to the Initial Pastorate Fund in 1937.^[49] At the April Church Meeting the question of what support should be given to this effort was fully discussed, and £25 promised to the fund.^[50] Later that year the November Church Members' Meeting was informed that of the £25 promised by the church to the Initial Pastorate Fund only £3/18/- had so far been contributed.^[51] The amount donated reached about £9 by December.^[52] The deacons recommended, and the church agreed, that no support for the Initial Pastorate Fund could be promised for 1938. It was agreed, however, that members could make individual gifts and that further discussion should take place at the May Church Meeting.^[53] A similar decision was made for 1939.^[54]

The next step in the church's involvement with the Forward Movement came in the invitation to the Rev J N Britton to conduct a mission from 2 to 6 December 1938.^[55] In early summer, 1938, in the light of a letter from the Forward Movement, the deacons expressed the wish that: '...in some way we should bring the evangelistic responsibility before our members.'^[56]

Such concern to be careful in spending money on evangelism is an indication of how stretched the church was financially. Despite the numerical growth of the church, financial difficulties were being felt from the start of the decade. In January 1930, for example, the Church Minutes record that: '...there was much to be thankful for but there must be something wrong somewhere as the receipts were less and expenses more than ever this year.'^[57] The discussion moved on to consider ways in which other groups within the church could give more generously to the central fund.

On 10 December 1930 a Special Church Meeting was held to consider the financial situation of the church. The statement of account concluded that a deficit for the year of £153 was unavoidable.^[58] By December 1931 the problem of the church deficit had become entrenched. In an effort to meet this situation the envelope system of giving was advocated strongly.^[59] One deacon, a builder and former sapper,^[60] Mr Sutton Smith, was of the opinion that: 'the Church members were [not] supporting the Church financially as much as they should do.'^[61] Others felt that a deficit was unavoidable in the light of the church's heavy programme of activities.^[62] Following the pastor's reading to the meeting of an appeal letter which the deacons had prepared for the membership a Mr Rennie questioned whether members: 'really could give more than at present.'^[63] The meeting then progressed to a warm debate over the merits or otherwise of the annual sale of work.^[64] By the end of the first quarter of 1931 the deficit had increased to £45/6/10.^[65] The hope was expressed that the deficit could be wiped out before the new pastor was appointed. The balance sheets for the remainder of the early 1930s show that debt was always a problem to the church. Imbalance in the accounts continued throughout the decade.^[66]

It was in early 1934 that many of the tensions in the church's leadership came to a head over the matter of a fee left unpaid to Mr Sutton Smith, one of the deacons. Sutton Smith had written to the secretary requesting the payment of the outstanding fees due to him in respect of the uncompleted scheme for the rebuilding of the school buildings, on the ground that he considered that those responsible had deliberately adopted the attitude of going as slowly as possible in the payment of the outstanding debt.^[67] In the Deacons' Meeting following, Mr Sutton Smith turned his attention to the question of supply preachers during the pastor's holiday. He argued that only students or ministers without a pastorate should be engaged: 'He added that it was wrong, in his opinion, for ministers in regular pastorates to undertake other preaching engagements during their holidays.' Considerable discussion took place, and the general view was expressed that a minister should be allowed to be the best judge whether he should undertake holiday engagements according to his peculiar circumstances.^[68] Clearly, as at Croham Road Baptist Church, strong tensions had arisen between the pastor and a section of the diaconate.

At the March 1934 Deacons' Meeting the secretary advised the deacons of the recommendation of the finance committee that a Special Deacons' Meeting should be held to enquire into the causes of the drop in attendances at the Sunday services. However: 'The Church Treasurer pointed out that although the attendances had decreased, the financial position was not so badly affected as might be expected.'^[69] At this subsequent meeting a wide-ranging discussion took place. One deacon, Thomas Pinkham, suggested that it was not necessary to pay too much attention to the financial position: 'which would rectify itself if attendances increased.' He proposed that a letter should be sent to all members drawing their

attention to the need for regular attendance at the Sunday services, while thanking the regular attendants for their loyalty.[70] The discussion moved on to reasons for the fall in attendances. Sutton Smith launched an attack on the pastor. He considered that Spelman "preached at" the people too much, the sermons in the morning were too long, the substitution of a thank-offering day for a sale of work had been a mistake, and the continual appeals for money were proving unsuccessful.[71] It was finally agreed that a draft letter should be drawn up for the next Deacons' Meeting. Additionally, it was also arranged that a clock should be placed on the north wall of the church sanctuary.[72] Ironically, the saga of the clock was to run on for months. It was eventually removed from the church in March 1936.

The church accounts during 1934 again showed real problems, with deficits on all accounts increasing. As 1935 unfolded it became clear that the financial plight of the church was not easing.[73] Following the presentation of the half-yearly figures to the Church Members' Meeting in July 1935 it was minuted that: 'In order to bring the financial needs of the Church more into prominence it was proposed...that a Notice be placed in each Lobby setting forth the weekly need of the Church and the amount received the previous Sunday.'[74]

In October 1936 it was reported that the church expenses account was £67 overdrawn. This was the second quarter running in which the deficit on the church account had been higher than at the same time in 1935.[75] The treasurer's report for 1937 indicated that: 'the Church Deficit as at 31st December was £17 less than in the previous year but this was due to a drop in expenses of £53. The receipts for 1937 were £36 less than in the previous year. The Pastor expressed some concern with regard to the falling off in receipts and asked for frank discussion but no interest was

shown.'[76]

In fact, 1937 again saw a drop in receipts. After the presentation of the yearly figures at the March 1938 Church Members' Meeting a serious discussion followed: 'Mr Wardley asked to what this drop in receipts could be attributed and the Pastor voiced the Diaconate's concern and pointed out that the year was an abnormal one for losses of membership and very few gains.'[77] The first quarter accounts for 1938 showed no improvement,[78] the June 1938 meeting of the deacons noting that: '...it is apparent that at the end of the current year we shall be faced with a serious financial position...'[79] At the subsequent Church Meeting: 'The Pastor again voiced the Deacons' concern with regard to the financial position.'[80]

A further detailed discussion took place at the December Deacons' Meeting. Much attention was given to methods of cutting expenditure.[81] Although the full 1938 accounts were not finalised for the Church Meeting held in January 1939 the financial state of the church was sufficiently serious for a debate to be opened.[82] The first two months of 1939 showed a significant increase in offerings and decrease in outgoings.[83] This was maintained through March and April. At the end of April the church was informed that an improvement of £50 was apparent over the figures for the first four months of 1938.[84] This improvement continued through May and June, and for the first six months of 1939 it amounted to £60 more than the comparable figure for 1938.[85] At the Church Meeting held on 14 October 1939 it was reported that: '...the prospect was that £179 would be required by the end of the year to clear the Church Expenses and Building Fund Accounts. An Appeal was made for a good Thank Offering.'[86]

Despite the financial difficulties of the church, many appeals from Christian organisations were accepted during the 1930s, although several

of them were presented as retiring offerings, rather than donations directly from church funds. These included:

the Baptist Union Sustentation Fund (1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1939);^[87] Hospital Sunday (1930, 1931, 1937, 1939);^[88] Croydon Hospital Fund (1931, 1932, 1934);^[89] the Royal Surgical Aid Society (1931);^[90] London Baptist Association Special Appeals (1931, 1934; 1938);^[91] Croydon Nursing Service (1932);^[92] Croydon Occupational Centre for the Unemployed (1932);^[93] the German Refugee Fund (1934);^[94] Croham Road Baptist Church Building Appeal (1934);^[95] the Welsh Mine Disaster (1934);^[96] the High Sheriff of London's Appeal for Jarrow (1934);^[97] the National Sunday School Union (1934, 1935);^[98] the Prince of Wales' Jubilee Trust (1935);^[99] the Cancer Research Fund (1936);^[100] the Baptist Missionary Society Special Appeal (1936, 1939);^[101] Vernon Baptist Church (1937);^[102] the Irish Home Mission (1937);^[103] Croydon Basque Children's Committee and Non-Aryan Children's Committee (1938);^[104] Building Appeal by Selsdon Baptist Church (1939);^[105] the Mayor of Croydon's Main Fund for all Refugee work carried on in Croydon (1939).^[106]

Not surprisingly, many appeals were rejected. These included such varied concerns as:

the National Sunday School Union (1930);^[107] the Salvation Army (1931);^[108] Spurgeon's Orphanage (1931);^[109] Vernon Chapel, King's Cross Road (1931);^[110] the NSPCC (1931, 1933, 1934);^[111] Bethel Baptist Church, Glyncorrwg (1932);^[112] the Russian Clergy and Church Aid Fund (1932);^[113] Welsh Baptist Union Superannuation Scheme

(1933);[114] the Irish Baptist College (1933);[115] the London Baptist Association President's Appeal (1933, 1934, 1938);[116] Dagenham Baptist Mission 1933);[117] East Sheen Baptist Church(1933);[118] the Croydon Council of Social Service (1934);[119] the German Refugees Assistance Fund (1934, 1938);[120] the Croydon Occupational Centre for the Unemployed (1935, 1938);[121] the West Ham Children's Haven (1935);[122] Oxted Congregational Church (1935);[123] Baptist Missionary Society (1935);[124] the Haig Fund (1935);[125] the Young People's Department of the Baptist Union (1935);[126] the National Peace Congress (1935);[127] the Baptist Union Temperance Department (1935);[128] the Croydon Council of Social Service (1937);[129] the Croydon Nursing Service (1937);[130] the Basque Children's Fund (1937, 1938);[131] the Irish Baptist Home Mission Jubilee Appeal (1937);[132] the Sustentation Fund[133] the Continental Fund (1937);[134] the Spanish Refugees' Fund (1938);[135] King George's Jubilee Trust (1938);[136] the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews[137];the Baptist Colonial Society (1938);[138] the Croydon Association for Moral Welfare (1938, 1939);[139] Beulah Baptist Church (1938);[140] the National Society for Cancer Relief, (1938);[141] the British Legion Fund Appeal (1938);[142] Russian Missionary Society (1938);[143] Kenton Baptist Free Church (1938);[144] Epsom Baptist Church (1939);[145] Erith Baptist Church (1939);[146] the Irish Baptist Home Mission (1939);[147] Dr Barnardo's Homes (1939);[148] the Royal Wanstead School (1939);[149] Moorfields Eye Hospital (1939);[150] the Mayor of Croydon's Appeal for Refugee Children (1939);[151] the Pitlake London City Mission (1939);[152] the National Young Life Evangelistic Campaign (1939);[153] the National British Women's Total Abstinence Union (1939)[154].

Few references occur in the church records to the financial needs of the members and friends of the church. However, there were clearly many needy folk attending the church, for at the Deacons' Meeting of 20 October 1936 a discussion took place on the distribution of the Barrow bequest. Mr Pinkham explained that some 30 to 40 persons received grants of varying amounts which were distributed by the pastor. As at Croham Road, only the pastor and Treasurer were aware of the names of recipients.[155]

Another issue which was to recur throughout the decade was the perceived movement towards Anglicanised worship. The first hint of this debate may be detected at the Church Meeting held on 28 April 1930. A Mrs E W Lambourne spoke of chants and psalms: '...being sung in Church and suggested it would be nice if a hymn had been sung at the dedication of the children on the previous Sunday.'[156] In October of that year Church members were drawn into serious debate about 'Sunday Church Music.'[157] On 27 July 1931 Mr Vincent Smith, a deacon and former RAMC sergeant major,[158] gave notice of motion that: '...he wished to draw attention to certain practices in the Church on Sundays, especially in regard to the Colours of the Guides and Scouts, the standing of the deacons at the rostrum rail during the dedication prayer for the offerings, and also in regard to the singing of the chant.'[159] The motion was brought to the Church Meeting held on 28 September 1931. The chairman suggested that each item should be discussed and then voted on. In each case there was a substantial majority in favour of no alteration to the current procedure.[160]

A similar situation arose at a Deacons' Meeting on 8 December 1931. On this occasion it was agreed that: '...at the communion table the Secretary should sit at the Pastor's right hand side and the Church Treasurer on the

Pastor's left; and that the other deacons should endeavour to occupy the remaining seats in the same order on each occasion.'[161] At the Deacons' Meeting held on 9 May 1933 a discussion took place, at the secretary's instigation, of the rightness or otherwise of members other than deacons being invited to give thanks for the bread and wine. It was agreed, with one dissentient, Mr Sutton Smith, to leave the matter to the discretion of the Pastor.'[162]

The reaction against a perceived quasi-Anglicanism was also a reflection of a somewhat Brethrenish view of worship. For example, at the Church Meeting of 27 June 1932, a Mr Quinton proposed that: '...the hymns at the Sunday evening communion services should be sung unaccompanied. Mr Quinton explained that he considered it approached nearer to the true type of the service, and gave an added meaning to the service.'[163] A month later, at the September Church Meeting, the secretary brought forward a majority recommendation from the diaconate that: '...the sidesmen who bring the collection boxes to the platform rail should return immediately to their pews and not wait until the Organist finishes his voluntary, and that the Pastor offer the dedicatory prayer at the end of the voluntary as at present...After various members had spoken on the subject both for and against the resolution was lost by about 31 votes to 20.'[164] This debate had been prompted by a letter from the choir secretary asking if some re-arrangement of the service might be possible in order: '...to allow the organ voluntary to be finished and not abruptly ended when the sidesmen brought the offerings to the platform table.' After lengthy discussion the deacons had agreed, 5 votes to 3, to retain the current practice.[165] By the January Church Meeting of 1933 the experiment in unaccompanied hymn-singing at communion services had been deemed a failure. It was agreed that the hymns sung at the communion services should be accompanied by the

organ.[166]

In November 1933 the deacons agreed: '...to an experiment to substitute for the metal plates the ordinary wood collection boxes at the communion services.' The next item on the agenda was brought by Mr Latreille who: '...referred to the recent disorder which had occurred owing to the absence of any definite order in which Deacons should arrange themselves on the platform at Communion services.' It was agreed that additional chairs should be placed on the platform before the service and that the seating should be planned beforehand.[167] A month later the deacons voted 4:3 that the communion offering should be taken on plates, and not with boxes.[168] The vexed question of seating at the communion service was raised again in notice of motion given by Mr W J Lambourne at the Deacons' Meeting held on 13 March 1934.[169] The matter was eventually discussed in May. This time it was agreed that: '...three deacons only sit on each side of the Pastor; and that the deacons taking the prayers be relieved from taking the elements to the congregation. After discussion the resolution was carried by four votes to two. There were three abstentions.'[170] At the Deacons' Meeting held on 12 June 1934 Mr Sutton Smith gave notice of a motion that the resolution passed at the Deacons' Meeting on 8 May 1934 be rescinded.[171] The debate at the subsequent meeting is revealing of the view held by many in the 1930s of the high office of deacon. This resolution was lost by 2 votes for and 4 votes against. There were two abstentions. The debate deepened over the summer, and at the September Deacons' Meeting: 'The Pastor referred to the absence from the rostrum of Messrs Vincent and Sutton Smith at the last two evening services, & pleaded with them to take their place on these occasions in accordance with the rota arranged.'[172] Then, as the deacons turned to consider the church Anniversary on 7 October: 'It was proposed by Mr Sutton Smith &

seconded by Mr Pinkham that all the deacons (if present) should sit on the rostrum at the evening communion service...The resolution was accepted & passed on the understanding that it was for this special occasion only. Five voted in favour & one against the resolution. There were 3 abstentions.'[173]

By May 1936 there had been a *de facto* change in policy on seating for deacons at the communion services: 'The advisability of reinstating the railing to the front of the rostrum was fully considered & it was agreed that this should not be put back into its former position.'[174] A further twist to the debate over the communion occurred in July 1937 when Mr Pinkham resolved that: '...in future the bread & wine on the table should remain uncovered, & that during the service the vase of flowers stand on the small table which it was agreed should be removed from the pulpit. The arrangements were unanimously agreed to.'[175] Then in September of that year correspondence occurred between Mr Vincent Smith and the pastor. This was read to the Deacons' Meeting.[176] It transpires that this debate centred on the matter of who should lead communion prayers. The diaconate now felt that this was their responsibility.[177]

At the Church Meeting in April 1934 a lengthy discussion took place on the role of the choir in worship. This centred on the Harvest Festival services for that year. It was eventually resolved that the choir should perform the traditional Harvest Festival Cantata on a week night. The Sunday Harvest Festival services should be traditional in their worship style. It was also decided that there should be an official Choir Sunday at which: '...the loose money in the collections be donated to the Choir Funds - *in lieu* of the retiring collections.'[178]

At the Deacons' Meeting held in June 1935 Mr Sutton Smith referred to the singing of the Lord's Prayer as part of the Choir Sunday service and

considered that: '...it should not have been done as so many objected. Views favouring the singing were also expressed.'[179] The following month the pastor reported on discussions which had taken place within the diaconate: '...[the diaconate] had for some time past discussed the question of the seating of the deacons on the platform at the evening services, and that, as a result, it had been agreed by a majority that in future only six deacons should sit on the platform; and the remainder sit among the congregation; service at the table by rota.'[180]

Turning from matters of worship, the question of the church's stance on traditional social issues must now be considered. At the July 1930 Church Meeting it was reported that the Band of Hope annual conference was to be held in Croydon in 1930. An appeal was made for hospitality for the delegates who would be attending.[181] In 1931 the church observed the annual Temperance Sunday on 15 November.[182] By the end of 1932, however, the church was having to weigh very carefully any financial appeals from temperance organisations. A letter from the National United Temperance Council asking for church support and inviting a minimum subscription of 5/- was left to: '...lie on the table.'[183] The first actually strident reference to alcohol abuse in church papers is to be found in the minutes of the Church Members' Meeting held on 26 June 1933. The minute referred to the Hotels and Restaurants Bill.[184] Grave concern was expressed about its implications. The church was, however, in a somewhat difficult position when it came to matters of alcohol abuse, its buildings and organ having been provided by the Watney sisters. Harry Spelman explained his view of this dilemma in a *Croydon Times* feature on 11/3/33: 'What about Brewers' money? Our Church was built by the Misses Watney, who carried out real Christian work in the district...The money is gained by trading and

that trading is made legitimate by law, and in the view of some Christian people is still in accord with Christian principles.'

For Temperance Sunday in 1934, 14 January, the deacons decided that 300 copies of a leaflet prepared by the Temperance Department of the Baptist Union should be distributed to the church congregation and the Sunday school. This was specifically aimed at opposing the campaign of the brewers then running.[185] In 1935 Temperance Sunday clashed with the church's Christian Endeavour Sunday. It was decided that the pastor should: '...deal with the matter of total abstinence as convenient on that day.'[186]

At the first Church Meeting of 1934 the pastor again referred to the Hotels and Restaurants Bill and the Licensing (Standardisation of Hours) Bill. Debate at the meeting was inconclusive.[187] Significantly, when in October 1934 an appeal was made for helpers at the Baptist Union Temperance Department bazaar which was arranged on behalf of the Temperance Council of the Christian Churches no volunteers were forthcoming.[188] A lengthy minute for the Church Meeting held on 24 June 1935 dealt with the Temperance Posters Campaign. Support was offered for this scheme.[189]

Very significantly, in 1938 the deacons decided for the first time not to organise the distribution of leaflets on behalf of the Baptist Union Temperance Department, although Temperance Sunday was to be observed on 20 November.[190] When the Church Meeting took place on 18 May 1939 it was noted that: 'Small numbers were due to the Croydon Band of Hope May Pageant.'[191] In August 1939 it was agreed that the church would observe Temperance Sunday on 19 November. The Baptist Union Temperance Department had suggested that leaflets advocating temperance should be distributed on this occasion. The deacons decided not to take up this suggestion -

presumably for financial reasons.[192]

On a not unrelated matter an historically fascinating debate occurred at the Deacons' Meeting of 13 June 1933. The pastor stated: '...that certain members of the Church had complained of certain items in some of the entertainments given last season, and stated that every endeavour should be made to keep the tone as high as possible. Various aspects of the matter were discussed, and it was agreed that where possible attention should be drawn to the matter.'[193]

The issue arose again at the Deacons' Meeting in January 1936. On that occasion the Building Fund committee's request to give a play for the fund was disallowed.[194] In February 1936 the issue was again to be found on the deacons' agenda. On this occasion the church Cricket Club asked for permission to hold a concert on 6 May. In sanctioning this the deacons agreed: '...that it be pointed out that the deacons were concerned with the increasing numbers of plays being given at the Church & that this programme, it was hoped, would be arranged without the play suggested.'[195] The following week Miss Page, the Guide leader, met with the deacons to discuss the forthcoming Guides' concert. The meeting acquainted her with: '...the views of the Pastor and deacons on plays being given on the Church premises. The Pastor made a statement on the matter and arranged to have a talk with the Guides on the subject.'[196] At the same time: 'It was agreed that the Secretary should write to Mr Reynolds [responsible for the Cricket Club] thanking him for his having fallen into line with the wishes of the Pastor and Deacons respecting plays in connection with their effort.'[197]

The matter was by no means settled, however. At the next Deacons' Meeting a lengthy debate took place. The deacons were rigidly divided on this issue.[198] The Church Members' Meeting of 14 September 1936

discussed this same matter. The issue came to a head over a question placed on the agenda by the church organist: '...Mr Bennett asked as to how the Choir should proceed with their forthcoming concert in view of the correspondence some few months ago on the question of plays and sketches being given on church premises.' Again, the debate generated much heat, but little unanimity.[199] Clearly, there was a most unhappy relationship between Mr Bennett, the church organist, and the minister and deacons. This came to a head at the Church Meeting in January 1939: 'The Church Secretary reported that Mr Bennett had relinquished his duties as Church Organist.' [200]

Turning now to the question of the stance adopted by the church to the pacifism debate, according to extant minutes approximately a third of the congregation of Brighton Road Baptist Church were personal members of the League of Nations in 1930.[201] Leonard Smith, who took over the secretaryship on 24 November 1930, saw momentous world events in prospect. He recorded that the next 10 years would be a very important time in the life of the League and 'it needed to be kept going in a very strong way and position.' [202]

On 1 June 1931 Mr Quinton gave notice of a motion for the next Church Meeting that the church apply for corporate membership of the League of Nations Union.[203] At the subsequent Church Meeting Mr Quinton explained that: '...the object of such membership...amongst other things, required the Church to support definite propaganda in the cause of peace and furthering the objects of the Union.' [204] In October 1931 the Croydon branch of the League of Nations asked the church for permission to erect notice boards and posters in the church hall and in the grounds. This was declined by the deacons on the grounds that there was already a League

notice board on church premises.[205] A month later the church was involved in literature distribution to the congregation under the auspices of the Croydon Disarmament Campaign.[206] The church agreed unanimously to join the League, and at the 30 November 1931 Church Meeting Mr Leonard Smith handed in the certificate of enrolment of the church as a corporate member of the League of Nations Union. It was agreed that the certificate should be framed and displayed in a prominent position on the premises.[207]

There was a tendency in many churches to let the membership of the League of Nations Union become simply a formal, passive affiliation. Mr L H Smith, the church's representative to the League, stated at the Church Meeting of 26 September 1932 that he was: '...being urged by the Croydon Branch of the Union to hold a L of N U meeting in the Milledge Hall [of the church] to stimulate interest in the Union's endeavours. He referred to a special lantern lecture which could be hired.'[208] This suggestion was warmly welcomed by the church members.

1933 saw the annual disarmament lecture on 22 March.[209] Information from the Peace Society was referred to the church's League of Nations representative.[210] The church also had an active junior branch of the League.[211] In November 1934 the church was informed of the impending League of Nations Peace Ballot. An appeal was made for volunteer canvassers in the district around the church.[212] This appeal was repeated at the January Church Members' Meeting.[213] A retiring collection was taken on 23 December 1934 on behalf of the expenses incurred by the Croydon Committee for the National Declaration on the League of Nations and Armaments.[214] Only £1 was given in this collection, so the deacons agreed that the sum should be made up to 2 guineas.[215]

In June 1935 Harry Spelman informed the church members about the activities of the Baptist Peace Fellowship. He made clear that membership of this group was now open to all members of Baptist churches, lay as well as clerical.[216] The question of support for the Women's International League arose at the Church Meeting held on 16 March 1936. On behalf of the church members the pastor signed a pledge to support the League's new peace efforts.[217] The church sent representatives to the Croydon United Peace Council in October 1937. The special meeting on this occasion was to protest against Japanese bombing of civilians in China.[218] In the Church Meeting held on 21 March 1938 the question of the continuance of the church's corporate membership of the League of Nations arose. A decision was deferred to the next meeting.[219] At that subsequent meeting a long and detailed debate took place with the result that the church ended its membership of the League.[220] In fact, Ceadel argues that 1936 was the key year during which League of Nations membership began its sharp decline.[221]

Unlike the Croham Road Baptist Church, Armistice-tide does not appear in the minutes of the Church or Deacons' Meetings for the first four years of the Thirties. Its first mention came at a Church Meeting held on 22 October 1934. The minute notes that the Pastor stated that various suggestions had been made concerning the best way of observing the service of remembrance. After discussion it was eventually decided to leave the matter with the pastor and deacons.[222]

The matter of the Sunday opening of cinemas raised its head at the Church Meeting held on 29 September 1930. Hugh Cross had already prepared a resolution to be sent to the Town Clerk opposing such opening. This was read to the Church Meeting and carried unanimously.[223] It was also

resolved unanimously that a letter should be sent to each of the Croydon South ward Council members asking them to support the resolution. A month later the Church Members' meeting was informed that Councillors Marshall and Dees had replied to the letters sent to them; Councillor Hawkes had not done so.[224] It was further reported that both candidates who had replied to the Church's letters were in favour of Sunday opening.

At the Deacons' Meeting held on 8 March 1932 correspondence from the Secretary of the Croydon and District Free Church Council was considered. The Council asked for the church's view on the questions: '(1) whether the Council should oppose Sunday Cinemas in any form, or (2) whether the Council should stand for a policy of restricted opening on specified terms?' It was agreed to recommend the Church to support the first proposal.[225]

The Church Meeting on 30 November 1931 had been informed by Mr Sutton Smith of the recent compromise offered by the Bishop of Croydon to the Croydon borough Council in connection with the opening of cinemas on Sunday, and to the fact that the compromise had the support of the general Council of the Croydon and District Free Church Council, although the Executive of the Council were against it. He moved that the church send a strong letter of condemnation to the Free Church Council deploring the action of that Council, and desiring that the Council should strenuously resist any efforts made to secure the opening of cinemas on Sundays.[226] After considerable discussion the motion was carried. Unfortunately, the voting pattern is not recorded. The Secretary of the Croydon and District Free Church Council replied to the church's expressed concern over the Sunday cinema debate. Sadly, this reply is not extant. At the Church Meeting held on 22 February 1932 Harry Spelman referred to the discussion on Sunday cinemas held at the recent Free Church Council meeting. The

church was to be asked to discuss and vote on a questionnaire which was to be issued to all the churches.[227]

This questionnaire was presented to the church members a month later.[228] In the April Church Meeting the pastor inquired whether the church wished to discuss the matter further. After considerable discussion it was agreed that: '...the whole question of the Church's obligations in regard to the observance of the Sabbath and in relation to Sunday amusements should be considered at the May Church meeting.'[229] By the end of October 1932 the pastor was referring to: '...the need for volunteers to assist in the campaign against the opening of cinemas on Sunday...several members offered [assistance]. It was agreed that the Church Treasurer should receive donations for the campaign and pass them on to the Campaign Committee.'[230]

When, at a Church Meeting one month later, the pastor referred to the appeal from the Croydon Keep-your-Sunday Association for the sum of £25 to help meet the cost of the anti-Sunday cinema campaign the meeting resolved to refer the matter to the deacons.[231] Significantly, the church permitted a special envelope appeal on behalf of the Keep Your Sunday Association. It was also resolved: '...to take no further action unless a further appeal was received.'[232] Clearly, many in the church saw the introduction of Sunday cinemas as both a moral and a sabbatarian issue. Indeed, despite the church's precarious position financially, the deacons agreed that posters should be purchased advertising an Anti-Sunday Cinema Meeting in the church's Milledge Hall. This and other necessary printing cost 15/-.[233]

The position of many at Brighton Road was that all cinematographic presentations were essentially wrong. It led to a strange discussion on the use of films at a missionary exhibition: '...the question of allowing

the Church to be used for showing cinema films in connection with the [missionary] exhibition was fully discussed and Mr Wardley proposed that the majority decision of the diaconate in this matter should be supported. This was seconded by Mr L H Smith. The voting resulting in 23 for the resolution and 21 against.'[234] Significantly, when, in October 1938, a letter was read to the deacons from the Imperial Alliance for the Defence of Sunday dealing with their thirtieth birthday celebrations, they decided not to act on it.[235]

Moving on to the related theme of the church and politics it may be noted that the first overt interest in politics recorded in church documents occurred at the Church Members' Meeting of 26 October 1931. The chairman, Mr W T Lambourne, suggested that: '...in view of the political crisis the meeting should sing a national hymn. This was done, after which Mr Lambourne offered prayer.'[236]

At the Church Meeting held on 24 June 1935, the question of support for the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction arose. It was minuted that: 'Delegates from the Church were invited to attend a convention at Central Hall, Westminster, July 1 and 2. [It was proposed that] failing to find delegates a letter from the Church stating its sympathy with the Council's policy be sent to the conveners of the meeting. However, the proposer and seconder both agreed to attend the convention if possible.'[237] Following the Central Hall meeting a full report was presented at the July Church Meeting: 'It being considered advisable to provide further opportunity for discussion it was agreed to bring the matter forward again at the week-night Meeting on 16th September.'[238] No record of that meeting is extant.

Regarding wider social issues, under the pastorate of Harry Spelman a traditional evangelical view of social ethics was taught. For example, dances were not to be countenanced on church premises, card-playing was to be avoided, Sunday trading in any form was to be avoided,[239] raffles were considered to be wrong, as was involvement in sweepstakes,[240] Christians were to live out their faith in daily living, conversion could and should change people totally, ministers should live simply. [241] Interestingly, although the church's finances remained precarious throughout the 1930s, it appears that the deacons operated a policy of allowing the use of church premises only to Christian organisations. For example, when a Mr Bert Weber of Coulsdon requested the use: 'on terms to be arranged, of the large school hall by his Badminton Club on two nights per week, Mr W T Lambourne proposed, and Mr S Smith seconded that permission be not granted. This was agreed to.' [242]

Another facet of the debate on the Christian view of spiritual and social life came into focus when, in June 1936, the deacons discussed the functioning of the church's social club. Mr W Lambourne asked as to the usefulness of the club and expressed the opinion that Mr Scoggins was not suitable to have control of the club. He was also concerned that the hall would become liable for rating assessment if billiards were played in it. It was decided that Deacons should visit the club occasionally.[243] Mr Rennie, another of the deacons, reported back a week later: '...on his visit to the Social Club and expressed the view that if the Club was well supervised it could be made a useful adjunct to our Church in bringing young people into the Sunday services.' [244]

By the autumn of 1939 the social club had closed down.[245] It was resurrected, however, in early 1940 under the secretaryship of Harold Pinkham: 'This Club had arisen as a result of the meeting for soldiers and

other young people organised by the Committee appointed at the last Church Meeting...The formation of this Club was approved by the Diaconate subject to the condition that the Committee should always have a majority of Church members.'[246]

The church's wider ecumenical involvement was always somewhat unsure except when on a specifically evangelical basis. A team from the Oxford Group Movement met with church leaders in December 1933.[247] On this occasion the church sent a number of representatives at the request of the Bishop of Croydon.[248]

Some idea of how far apart from each other even the Free Churches found themselves may be gauged from a discussion at the Deacons' Meeting of 13 June 1933. Here the question arose of the general principle of publicising the events of churches outside the Baptist denomination. The secretary read a letter from the new Sanderstead Congregational Church asking that their forthcoming fete and sale of work should be announced in local churches. Only after some discussion was it eventually agreed that this event should be announced.[249]

At the Church Meeting held on 27 November 1933 the question of the Bishop of Croydon's letter referring to a recent gathering of Friends of Reunion was considered. The Bishop proposed that a series of meetings should be arranged in the area, at which the churches would be addressed by a clergyman or minister of another communion explaining the beliefs and traditions of the church to which the speaker belonged. Mr W L Lambourne, after expressing the view that no good would result from holding the type of meeting contemplated, proposed that the Bishop's letter lie on the table. The pastor stated that he could only accept that proposal on the understanding that it applied solely to the enquiry whether the Church

would receive a speaker, as the other question related solely to himself. It was eventually agreed to allow interchange of ministers.[250]

Finally, how did the church react to the outbreak of the Second World War? In July 1939 the question was raised as to ways in which the support and prayers of the church could be expressed to young men '...entering the Militia.' It was agreed that a small book should be presented to the church for noting details of such persons.[251] A Special Deacons' Meeting was convened for 28 August 1939. Several decisions were taken. A month later the Deacons' Meeting agreed to the purchase of curtains for the church hall suitable for 'Darkout purposes.' [252] Detailed planning took place for coping in the event of air raids taking place.

The war had an immediate effect on church activities. At the first Church Meeting following the outbreak of war the agenda was dominated by items relating to the production of the church magazine which was suspended in September 1939.[253] At the same time discussions took place on the advisability of the church being open for prayer every day.[254] This was later passed over as impractical.[255]

In attempting to summarise this mass of material we may conclude that the Brighton Road Baptist Church was, in many ways, similar in outlook to the Croham Road Church. However, it is also clear that its ecclesiology was both more developed and more conservative. Indeed, it is arguable that this was the cause of its most severe and chronic problem, viz an inability to respond rapidly and with ease to changing conditions both in church life and in the community. This is seen most patently in the long and heated discussions over such matters as the seating for deacons at communion services and Church Meetings, the style of worship and the level

at which the preacher was supposed to pitch his sermon. As numbers declined the church sought to increase its evangelistic commitment, yet despite its avowed evangelicalism the impression remains that the broad body of the membership were never intellectually convinced of the rightness of such a strategy. This might actually be a reflection of the high degree of social attachment to the church of members who had long since ceased their active spiritual commitment. Thus, at the very time when the membership was being encouraged to reach out in evangelism considerable energy was also being expended by the minister and some of the deacons in trying to deal with those existing members who had stopped coming to the church. By mid-decade the church was becoming significantly less inclusive with greater stress on active, committed affiliation.

Preoccupied as it was with problems of decline and disputed churchmanship, the Brighton Road church found it difficult to respond to increasingly severe social conditions in its neighbourhood. It may also be argued that a sense of *laissez faire* had descended on the church as a result of its size and social eminence as it entered the Thirties. By the end of the decade the church was still labouring under this burden, and continuing to lose ground both numerically and financially. Indeed, it may fairly be argued that a cycle of decline had by this time become firmly established. Decline led to further self-examination with all its resultant recriminations, which, in turn, led to further decline. Not unrelated to this debate was a growing sense of alienation amongst the younger members of the church as their attempts at evangelistic innovation, enlivening of the services and catering for the social needs of their peers were all, in turn, opposed by a group within the church's leadership.

Additionally, the financial pressures which restricted the work of the

church were severe, and like its counterpart at Croham Road giving to outside organisations tended to be to causes with which the church members could easily identify. Yet in some intangible way the building project at Croham Road - whilst increasing financial pressures - had also provided a focus which helped the church through the difficult years of the late 1930s. What internal dispute there may have been occurred in the run-up to the building work. The years following that work were also difficult but, by all accounts, were happy.

Finally, on the subject of traditional social issues the position of the church was fairly clear. It tended to identify itself with the standard anti-Sunday cinema, pro-Temperance, apoliticalism which had descended on Nonconformists since the mid-1910s. Yet even on these issues, there was a distinct weakening of protest by the end of the decade. Drama on church premises did not fare so well, however. All-in-all, the church's emphases on traditional values were more overt than was the case for the Croham Road church.

Footnotes to Chapter 10:

1. See H Pinkham's 'A Brief History of the Church,' in the Diamond Jubilee edition of the church's magazine *The Broadcaster* (September-October 1954), p 4. See also: *A Brief Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the South Croydon Baptist Church: AD 1869-AD 1891*, by Walter Schwind, MS in Brighton Road Baptist Church Archives, pp 1f. The archives are stored at the church premises.
2. *Brighton Road Baptist Church Jubilee booklet, 1894 to 1944*, passim.
3. *Broadcaster*: Jubilee, p 4.
4. *Broadcaster*: Jubilee, p 5.
5. See *Magazine*, August 1919, No 1, for special articles attending Sutherland's accepting of the call from Brighton Road.
6. Church, 24/3/30 p 57.
7. Church, 28/7/30 pp 66f.
8. Church, 29/9/30 p 68.
9. Church, 27/10/30 pp 72f.
10. Minutes of Church Meetings, Brighton Road Baptist Church, 22/1/30, p 52. (In future references I will refer simply to 'Church'.)
11. Deacons, 14/7/30 pp 355f.
12. Deacons, 11/8/30 p 357. See also: Deacons, 8/11/30 p 359.
13. Church, 24/11/30 p 80.
14. Church, 14/1/31 pp 90f.

15. Church, 14/1/31 pp 87f. See also: Deacons, 8/1/31 p 4. Church, 27/4/31 p 109; Deacons, 14/4/31 p 23.
16. Deacons, 14/4/31 pp 21f.
17. Deacons, 9/6/31 p 34. See also: 14/7/31 pp 39f; 11/8/31 p 41; 22/9/31 p 44.
18. Church, 24/8/31 p 125.
19. Church, 28/9/31 pp 128f.
20. Deacons, 5/11/31 pp 57f.
21. Church, 30/12/31 pp 141f.
22. See, for example: Church 24/10/32 pp 179f; 28/11/32 pp 182f.
23. See, for example: Church, 30/5/32 pp 162f; 30/5/32 p 165.
24. Church, 25/7/32 p 172. See also: Church, 26/9/32 p 174.
25. Church, 26/9/32 p 176. See also: Deacons, 12/4/32 p 81; 10/5/32 p 88; 14/6/32 p 92; 13/9/32 p 102; 13/9/32 pp 104f; Church, 26/9/32 p 177; Church 27/2/33 pp 195f.
26. Church, 23/1/33 pp 188f.
27. Church, 27/2/33 pp 193f.
28. Church, 3/4/33 pp 197f.
29. Church, 23/1/33 p 191. See also: *Croydon Advertiser*, 3/12/32; 5/8/33; Deacons, 14/2/33 p 131.
30. See, for example: Church, 16/1/39 p 44.
31. Deacons, 14/3/33 p 138.
32. Deacons, 9/5/33 pp 143f.
33. Church, 25/6/34 p 250. See also: Church, 28/5/44 p 249.
34. Church, 29/4/35 p 285. See also: Deacons, 9/4/35 p 27.
35. Church, 26/9/34 p 255. See also: Deacons, 11/7/34 p 214.
36. Church, 26/9/34 p 257.
37. Church, 22/10/34 p 260.
38. Church, 17/7/39 p 49.
39. Church, 23/9/35 p 299.
40. Church, 25/3/35 p 280.
41. Church, 29/4/35 p 283.
42. Church, 23/9/35 pp 300f.
43. Deacons, 10/9/35 p 42. See also: Deacons, 22/10/35 p 50.
44. Church, 16/3/36 p 326. See also: Deacons, 10/12/35, p 58; Church, 20/4/36 p 327.
45. Deacons, 10/5/32. cf 12/4/32 p 81.
46. Deacons, 22/9/36 p 101. See also: Deacons, 12/1/37 p 112; 9/2/37 p 114.
47. Deacons, 12/1/37 p 113.
48. Deacons, 9/3/37 p 119.
49. Deacons, 6/4/37 p 122.
50. Church, 19/4/37 p 2. See also: Deacons, 13/7/37 p 129.
51. Church, 15/11/37 p 13.
52. Deacons, 14/12/37 p 142.
53. Church, 17/1/38 p 16. See also: Church, 23/5/38 p 26; Deacons, 12/10/37 pp 135f; 9/11/37 p 138; 11/1/38 p 146.
54. Church, 21/11/38 p 40. See also: Church, 16/1/39 pp 43f.
55. Church, 21/3/38 p 22. See also: Deacons, 22/3/38 p 156. For details of the planning for this mission see: Deacons, 8/3/38 p 161; 12/7/38 pp 174f; 9/8/38 p 179; Church, 19/9/38 p 33; 21/11/38 p 41.
56. Deacons, 14/6/38 p 173.
57. Church, 22/1/30 pp 53f.
58. Church, 10/12/30 p 81. See also: Deacons, 13/10/30 p 363; Special Deacons, 3/11/30 p 364; Deacons 17/11/30 pp 366f; 8/12/30 pp 369f.
59. Church, 10/12/30 pp 81f.
60. Hon ed H K Moore, *Croydon and the Great War* (Croydon, 1920), p 52.

61. Church, 10/12/30 p 82.
62. Church, 10/12/30 p 83.
63. Church, 10/12/30 p 83.
64. Church, 10/12/30 pp 84f. This debate occupied a large proportion of the next Church Members' Meeting. (Church, 14/1/31 pp 89f.)
65. Church, 27/4/31 p 109.
66. Church, 23/1/33 p 189. See also: Deacons, 10/1/33 p 125; Church, 22/1/34 p 235; 26/3/34 p 243.
67. Deacons, 10/1/34 pp 187f.
68. Deacons, 6/2/34 p 192.
69. Deacons, 13/3/34 pp 196f.
70. Deacons, 10/4/34 p 200.
71. Deacons, 10/4/34 p 201.
72. Deacons, 11/9/34 p 222. cf 10/3/36 p 77.
73. Church, 29/4/35 p 284.
74. Church, 22/7/35 p 296. See also: Deacons, 11/6/35 p 34.
75. Church, 19/10/36 p 340.
76. Church, 17/1/38 p 16.
77. Church, 21/3/38 p 20.
78. Church, 18/7/38 p 29.
79. Deacons, 14/6/38 p 173.
80. Church, 18/7/38 p 29.
81. Deacons, 13/12/38 pp 189f.
82. Church, 16/1/39 p 42.
83. Church, 20/3/39 p 45.
84. Church, 18/5/39 p 47.
85. Church, 17/7/39 p 50.
86. Church, 14/10/39 p 56.
87. Deacons, 13/1/30 pp 337f; 17/3/30 p 344; 12/1/32 p 64; 14/2/33 p 130; 6/2/34 p 192; 15/1/35 pp 14f. Church, 16/1/39 p 43; Deacons, 13/12/38 p 192; 10/1/39 pp 195f.
88. Deacons, 10/2/30 p 341; 17/3/30 p 343; 8/1/31 p 3; 9/2/37 p 116; Church, 16/1/39 p 43; Deacons, 13/12/38 p 192; 10/1/39 pp 195f.
89. Deacons, 10/2/31 p 9; Church, 22/2/32 p 153; Deacons, 6/2/34 p 190; Church, 30/4/34 p 245; Deacons, 8/5/34 p 203.
90. Deacons, 10/2/31 p 10.
91. Deacons, 14/7/31 p 38; 12/6/34 p 208; 17/10/34 p 225; Church, 23/5/38 pp 25f; 19/9/38 p 32; 21/11/38 p 39; Deacons, 11/10/38 p 185.
92. Deacons, 9/2/32 p 68.
93. Church, 26/9/32 p 177.
94. Church, 22/1/34 p 235.
95. Church, 28/5/34 p 250. cf Deacons, 8/5/34 pp 203f; 8/9/36 p 98; 22/9/36 p 99.
96. Church, 26/9/34 p 259.
97. Church, 26/11/34 p 271. See also: Deacons, 17/10/34 p 224; 13/11/34 p 2; 23/11/34 p 7.
98. Church, 26/11/34 p 270; Deacons, 15/1/35 pp 17f.
99. Church, 29/4/35 p 284.
100. Church, 16/3/36 pp 324f. See also: Deacons, 10/3/36 pp 76f.
101. Deacons, 21/7/36 p 93; Church, 8/8/39 pp 52f.
102. Deacons, 14/9/37 p 132.
103. Deacons, 9/11/37 p 139.
104. Church, 18/7/38 p 28.
105. Church, 20/3/39 p 46. See also: Deacons, 17/2/39 p 198.
106. Church, 17/7/39 p 50.
107. Deacons, 2/6/30 p 253.
108. Deacons, 10/2/31 p 10.

109. Deacons, 12/5/31 p 27.
110. Deacons, 9/6/31 p 32.
111. Deacons, 8/12/31 p 61; 10/1/33 pp 124f; 12/12/33 p 183.
112. Deacons, 8/3/32 p 74.
113. Deacons, 8/3/32 p 74.
114. Deacons, 11/7/33 pp 156f.
115. Deacons, 11/7/33 pp 156f.
116. Deacons, 11/7/33 pp 156f; Church, 24/7/33 p 217; 22/1/34 p 235; Deacons, 13/3/34 p 196; 12/4/38 pp 163f.
117. Deacons, 12/9/33 p 163.
118. Deacons, 10/10/33 p 168.
119. Deacons, 10/1/34 p 186.
120. Deacons, 10/1/34 p 186; 11/1/38 p 144.
121. Deacons, 12/2/35 p 20; Church, 21/3/38 p 19; Deacons, 8/3/38 pp 158f.
122. Church, 29/4/35 p 284.
123. Church, 29/4/35 p 284.
124. Church, 29/4/35 p 284.
125. Deacons, 14/5/35 p 32.
126. Deacons, 14/5/35 p 32.
127. Deacons, 11/6/35 p 35.
128. Deacons, 12/11/35 p 54.
129. Deacons, 8/6/37 p 127.
130. Church, 21/6/37 p 4.
131. Church, 21/6/37 p 4; 21/3/38 p 19; Deacons, 8/3/38 pp 158f.
132. Deacons, 13/7/37 pp 129f.
133. Deacons, 9/11/37 p 138.
134. Deacons, 14/12/37 p 142.
135. Deacons, 11/1/38 p 144.
136. Deacons, 11/1/38 p 144.
137. Church, 21/3/38 p 19. See also: Deacons, 8/3/38 pp 158f.
138. Church, 21/3/38 p 19. See also: Deacons, 8/3/38 pp 158f.
139. Church, 21/3/38 p 19. See also: Deacons, 8/3/38 pp 158f; 13/6/39 pp 207f.
140. Deacons, 8/2/38 p 151.
141. Deacons, 12/4/38 pp 163f.
142. Deacons, 12/4/38 pp 163f.
143. Deacons, 11/6/38 p 171
144. Deacons, 11/6/38 p 171
145. Deacons, 13/6/39 pp 207f.
146. Deacons, 13/6/39 pp 207f.
147. Deacons, 13/6/39 pp 207f.
148. Deacons, 13/6/39 pp 207f.
149. Deacons, 13/6/39 pp 207f.
150. Deacons, 13/6/39 pp 207f.
151. Deacons, 13/6/39 pp 207f.
152. Deacons, 13/6/39 pp 207f.
153. Church, 17/7/39 p 49.
154. Church, 17/7/39 p 49.
155. Deacons, 20/10/36 p 104.
156. Church, 28/4/30 p 60. See also; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp 205f.
157. Church, 27/10/30 pp 74ff.
158. Moore, *Croydon and the Great War*, p 52.
159. Church, 27/7/31 p 124.
160. Church, 28/9/31 pp 129f.
161. Deacons, 8/12/31 p 62.
162. Deacons, 9/5/33 p 146.

163. Church, 27/6/32 p 168.
164. Church, 26/9/32 pp 175f.
165. Deacons, 9/8/32 pp 99f.
166. Church, 26/9/32 pp 175f.
167. Deacons, 14/11/33 pp 176f.
168. Deacons, 12/12/33 p 182.
169. Deacons, 13/3/34 p 197.
170. Deacons, 8/5/34 p 204.
171. Deacons, 12/6/34 p 211.
172. Deacons, 11/9/34 pp 218f.
173. Deacons, 11/9/34 pp 218f.
174. Deacons, 12/5/36 p 82.
175. Deacons, 13/7/37 p 130.
176. Deacons, 14/9/37 p 131.
177. Deacons, 12/10/37 pp 135f.
178. Church, 30/4/34 pp 247f.
179. Deacons, 11/6/35 p 35.
180. Church, 28/5/34 pp 248f.
181. Church, 28/7/30 p 67. See also: Deacons 2/6/30 p 353; 11/8/30 p 358.
182. Deacons, 11/8/31 p 43.
183. Deacons, 13/12/32 p 117.
184. Church, 26/6/33 pp 213f. See also: Deacons, 13/6/33 p 152; Church, 24/7/33 p 215.
185. Deacons, 14/11/33 p 174.
186. Deacons, 17/10/34 p 223. See also: Deacons, 13/11/34 pp 1f.
187. Church, 22/1/34 pp 233f. See also: Church, 26/2/34 p 238.
188. Church, 22/10/34 pp 262f.
189. Church, 24/6/35 p 293.
190. Deacons, 9/8/38 p 179.
191. Church, 18/5/39 p 47.
192. Deacons, 8/8/39 p 52.
193. Deacons, 13/6/33 p 152.
194. Deacons, 14/1/36 p 64.
195. Deacons, 4/2/36 p 67.
196. Deacons, 11/2/36 pp 69f.
197. Deacons, 11/2/36 p 70. See also: Deacons, 10/3/36 p 75.
198. Deacons, 25/2/36 pp 72f.
199. Church, 14/9/36 pp 338f. See also: Deacons, 8/9/36 pp 97f; 11/1/38 p 144.
200. Church, 16/1/39 p 43. See also: Deacons, 13/12/38 pp 193f; Emergency Deacons, 30/12/38 p 194; Deacons, 10/1/39 p 197; 17/2/39 p 198; Church, 20/3/39 p 46.
201. Church, 24/11/30 p 78.
202. *ibid.*
203. Church, 1/6/31 p 113.
204. Church, 30/6/31 p 117.
205. Deacons, 20/10/31 p 50.
206. Deacons, 5/11/31 pp 55f.
207. Church, 30/11/31 p 137.
208. Church, 26/9/32 p 176. See also: Deacons, 13/9/32 p 104; Deacons, 11/10/32 p 109.
209. Deacons, 14/2/33 p 133.
210. Deacons, 12/9/33 p 163.
211. Deacons, 12/6/34 p 210.
212. Church, 26/11/34 p 270.
213. Church, 28/1/35 p 272.
214. Deacons, 11/12/34 p 10.

215. Deacons, 15/1/35 pp 13f.
216. Church, 24/6/35 p 294.
217. Church, 16/3/36 p 325.
218. Deacons, 12/10/37 p 136.
219. Church, 21/3/38 pp 21f. See also: Deacons, 10/5/38 p 170.
220. Church, 23/5/38 pp 24f. See also: Church, 18/7/38 p 28.
221. Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p 262.
222. Church, 22/10/34 p 264. See also: Deacons, 17/10/34 p 225.
223. Church, 29/9/30 p 69.
224. Church, 27/10/30 p 72.
225. Deacons, 8/3/32 p 76. See also: Deacons, 12/4/32 p 78.
226. Church, 30/11/31 pp 139f.
227. Church, 22/2/32 p 154.
228. Church, 21/3/32 p 157.
229. Church, 25/4/32 p 159.
230. Church, 24/10/32 p 181. See also: Deacons, 11/10/32 pp 109f.
231. Church, 28/11/32 p 187.
232. Deacons, 13/12/32 p 120.
233. Deacons, 10/1/33 p 126.
234. Church, 15/3/37 p 352.
235. Deacons, 11/10/38 p 185.
236. Church, 25/10/31 p 122.
237. Church, 24/6/35 p 292. See also: Deacons, 9/7/35 p 37.
238. Church, 22/7/35 p 297. See also: Deacons, 10/9/35 p 39.
239. *Croydon Times*, 6/5/32.
240. *Croydon Times*, 3/6/33.
241. *Croydon Times*, 23/6/34.
242. Deacons, 9/5/33 pp 143f.
243. Deacons, 4/2/36 pp 66f. See also: Deacons, 14/1/36 p 64.
244. Deacons, 11/2/36 p 69. See also: Deacons, 25/2/36 p 73; 10/3/36 p 75; 12/5/36 p 81; 14/9/37 p 133; 12/10/37 p 134; 11/1/38 p 148; 12/4/38 p 166.
245. Deacons, 27/9/39 p 214.
246. Deacons, 19/12/39 p 224.
247. Deacons, 12/1/33 p 64.
248. Deacons, 14/11/33 p 174.
249. Deacons, 13/6/33 pp 150f.
250. Church, 27/11/33 pp 230f. See also: Deacons, 6/2/34 pp 191f. See also: Church, 22/1/34 p 233; Church, 26/2/34 p 238; Deacons, 10/4/34 p 202; Deacons, 11/3/35 p 23; 9/4/35 p 28; Deacons, 13/11/34 p 3.
251. Church, 17/7/39 p 51.
252. Deacons, 8/8/39 p 53.
253. Church, 14/10/39 pp 55ff. See also: Deacons, 17/9/39 p 212; 27/9/39 p 213; 29/10/39 p 218; 31/12/39 p 226.
254. Deacons, 27/9/39 p 214.
255. Deacons, 27/9/39 p 214.

Chapter 11

Other English and Welsh Baptist churches

This research has hitherto considered both the responses of the Baptist leadership to the shifting sands of Thirties political, religious and social change and the responses of two local churches in the London suburban setting of South Croydon. It is now necessary to compare these central and suburban findings with those for a wider selection of Baptist churches. The availability of good secondary sources has been a major factor in deciding which churches to study, as has the desire to consider as wide a range of geographical settings as possible within necessary constraints of space. Taking these criteria into account three Baptist Associations, Gwent (South Wales), Yorkshire, and Lancashire and Cheshire will first be studied. The latter two are considered together as representing the picture for the North of England. Additionally, five specific churches have been studied: Beulah Baptist Church, Hollingwood, Oldham (representing a traditional Lancashire cotton town within the Lancashire and Cheshire Association), Queen's Road Baptist Church, Coventry (a Nonconformist citadel in the heart of the industrial Midlands, but having close connections with South Wales), Avenue Baptist Church, Southend (a suburban-type setting in an area fast becoming suburbanised in the 1930s), Brentwood Baptist Church (a smaller, less successful Essex cause), and Park Road, Rushden, Northants (a much more secluded setting, geographically and culturally). No specific conclusions will be drawn in this chapter. Rather, these findings will be discussed in the overall conclusion to this thesis to be found in Chapter 12.

Gwent Baptist Association, South Wales

In his *Sowing Beside all Waters - the Baptist Heritage of Gwent*,^[1] Brynmor Pierce Jones has mapped out in considerable detail the development of both the Gwent Baptist Association and its constituent churches. Jones explores the phenomenon already noted in this thesis of Welsh Baptist churches in the 1920s and 1930s facing severe financial hardship due to rising unemployment rates in the valleys, compounded by unmanageable loan repayments on the vast chapels and Sunday school halls erected in the early years of the twentieth century.^[2] Additionally, finding the pastor's stipend, and heating and repairing the chapel buildings caused panic for many a diaconate. To compound the problem still further, the numbers of both adult and child attenders had peaked even as the new buildings were being erected. After 1906 decline became a clear pattern within the Welsh-speaking churches of South Wales, but was delayed until the early-Thirties for their English-speaking co-religionists. Thus, total membership of the Association stood at 15,000 in 1910, a little less than 14,000 in 1926, 12,500 in 1934, and 10,500 in 1940.^[3] More seriously, perhaps, 1/3 of all churches in the Association saw no baptisms in the first half of the 1930s. Part of the reason for this decline lies in a crisis of identity whereby the churches' own attempts at social distinctiveness served to alienate them from the mass of the populace. A second factor, however, was the forced emigration to find work in England which reached its peak in the mid-Thirties. Blaenau Gwent, for instance, sanctioned 165 transfer letters between 1918 and 1926.^[4] These points noted, Jones actually suggests that decline had set in even earlier than the statistics suggest, but shifting numbers of 'hearers' who went from chapel to chapel sampling the best preaching gave a false sense of

numerical security long after decline had actually set in. This is a phenomenon which recurs in most of the churches discussed below.

Strikingly, the development of the abstentionist movement in Wales took a slightly different line to that in England. Bands of Hope, for example, tended to flourish in once Welsh-speaking chapels in the western valleys which had lost their linguistic distinctiveness.[5] Indeed, the emphasis placed on temperance in the early part of the century was exhibited most profoundly in the pressure exerted on the government between 1904 and 1910 by both the Gwent Association and the Welsh Baptist Union for temperance education to be included as part of the school curriculum.[6] Deep rifts were also created between the chapels and the wider community by the campaigning of the former against public houses. This became particularly acute in Wales because so many of the benefit societies actually met on licensed premises, so that attacks on the drink trade were all too easily perceived as attacks on the working men and their values.[7] Although concern about the drink trade was to continue throughout the 1930s, it reached its peak in 1928 when the Gwent Baptist Association produced a four-fold programme calling for Parliamentary legislation to introduce a Temperance Bill, a Sabbath Day Bill, an extended Sunday Closing Act to include clubs, and to restrict greyhound racing in particular and gambling in general.[8] Thus, in one resolution, the three great planks of traditional Nonconformist social campaigning were brought together. It will be observed that this traditional social dissent served the cause of social categorisation in a manner not unlike that posited by Cox for the wider British Nonconformist community.

Yet this strident position was by no means normative in the Association. By the late Twenties, even in many once pro-temperance chapels, Bands of Hope were rapidly being replaced by Christian Endeavour groups and Young

Worshipper Leagues. In fact, many South Wales ministers had never felt at ease with the rise of Bands of Hope. 33 chapels in the association had no such groups by 1931, and a further 1/3 of those remaining lost theirs during the decade.^[9] As was the case east of the border, the Christian Endeavour groups laid great emphasis on consecration teaching and reflecting the wider symbiosis between the distinctive revival-based theology of the principality and that of the Keswick movement. It is difficult to overstate the profound influence of the Christian Endeavour movement with its insistence on forthright evangelical Christianity and its determination to create a new generation of office bearers and teachers.

The unease felt by many ministers about the temperance movement was, in part at least, a concern not to lose touch with working men who were rapidly moving politically towards the Labour Party even as it became more clearly humanistic in its motivation. There had been massive support for the Passive Resistance Movement in the Valleys, and many ministers and lay members of Baptist churches had developed good relationships with the Christian Socialists by the 1910s and continued this sympathy with socialism even as its Christian ethos diminished.^[10] The perception of many was that to attack working-class institutions was a recipe for disaster. Such concerns were by no means groundless, for the number of male members of churches declined far more rapidly than females.^[11]

The recurrent crises of the Twenties and Thirties brought out the best in some South Wales churches, with many chapels using their limited resources to feed and educate men in distress. Others, however, made progress only despite the opposition of large groups within their membership. At Ebenezer Abertillery, for example, in the mid-1920s, the church debated long and hard the merits or otherwise of moving over to

open membership at the same time as many within the church tried hard to block every initiative with the unemployed. It was only with the coming of a dynamic new minister and a radical change of diaconate that the church actually managed to make progress during the Thirties with success both in caring for the needy and winning new working-class members.[12] Yet the crises also destroyed the certitudes which had undergirded generations of Welsh Baptist life. Evangelism now seemed almost sacrilegious when so many were hungry and jobless. As has already been shown, there was a willingness on the part of many to think out the issues and to rise to the challenge of the slump, even if it meant that long-held Christian values might be challenged.[13] Yet, for others, the only hope of survival was perceived to rest in an escape to the old certainties, irrelevant as they increasingly were to the contemporary world. The result of this evading of the issues was disastrous. As Jones so graphically puts the position: 'It was those workless, hopeless depressions from 1926 to 1936 which robbed [the churches] of their future leadership.'[14] The issues facing the Baptists of South Wales were essentially no different from those facing Christians in London suburbia. Yet what could be a matter for earnest, yet largely comfortable, debate in Croydon was a matter of life or death in the Valleys both on an individual basis and for many of the churches.

Yorkshire Baptist Association and the Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association

Baptist work in Yorkshire dates back further than the mid-1640s. Certainly by that time Baptist soldiers and others were to be found worshipping regularly in the county. Similarly, Baptist work had been established in Cheshire and Lancashire by the 1660s.[15] In the fifty

years from 1837 to 1887 the number of churches had trebled, the number of members had risen more than six-fold whilst the population at large had multiplied only two and a half times.[16] Baptist influence grew along with their numbers. Alexander McLaren of Union Chapel, Manchester, for example, had a vision as large as that of John Wilson of Woolwich, asserting that: 'There will be no church establishment some day; the walls of sect will be broken down some day; science and religion will be married some day; the principles of the gospel will be applied to society some day...'[17] With the numerical growth came the new, often mock Gothic, chapels emulating the splendour of Victorian Anglican architecture.[18] Yet though the churches continued to grow in numbers well into the twentieth century, church statistics soon began to fall, slowly, but certainly, accelerating into a rapid decline. Concern deepened as the new century opened, for, despite strident policies of chapel-planting, membership figures continued to decline - most alarmingly amongst the working classes.[19] For Yorkshire Baptists, for example, the peak membership of 23,196 came in 1906, Sunday school attendance peaking at 47,586 in the same year. In the light of these figures great hope was expressed that Pleasant Sunday Afternoons would bridge the widening gap between chapel and non-chapel people, but as elsewhere in Britain the hope proved forlorn. As Sellers poignantly observes: 'The joyous satisfaction began to turn in on itself and become a glorying in the old days when the legendary chairs had to be brought into the aisles to accommodate the teeming congregations of the (equally legendary?) pulpit giants.'[20]

As elsewhere, considerable thought went into trying to determine why decline had begun. The Moderator of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association in 1907, George Macalpine, posited four reasons for the decline: an acquiescence in the creation/evolution debate; depression about

the effect of the newer critical Biblical scholarship; a lost sense of sin (as exhibited in the New Theology); and a lost sense of commitment to Christ.[21] The Pleasant Sunday Afternoons came under evangelical attack for these very reasons. These concerns are the more significant in the light of the fact that, unlike in the South of England, the Downgrade Controversy had only limited impact in the North. Indeed, the evidence available would indicate a more general and longstanding theological and intellectual openness amongst northern churches. Numerical anxieties were not openly expressed in the Yorkshire Association until 1908. As in the case of their near neighbours, the leadership of the Association called for a return to the old ways. Concerns over the decline in Sunday school attendance led to thoughtful analyses. J E Farquar, Moderator in the North West in 1912, highlighted the folly of '...the modern English craze that the world can be saved through the child,'[22] calling instead for major efforts to win adults. Others thought otherwise and called for the implementation of more modern graded systems and teacher training to be introduced.

The northern churches appear to have led the way in ecclesiological innovation, with considerable variety by the norms of the day being witnessed in Baptist worship before the end of the nineteenth century. Often in parallel with this change, the communion service was relegated to a once-a-month observance, being attached at the end of the main worship service. In other places it became a quarterly celebration in Presbyterian style.[23]

By common consent, the outbreak of the Great War was a seminal point for northern Baptists. It proved exceedingly difficult for the leaders of Association life to come to terms with a Christian patriotism, the 1915 Yorkshire Assembly, for example, speaking of its hatred for war, but

acknowledging the fact that large numbers of delegates recognised their national and international duty to oppose oppression by force as a last resort.[24] Whilst still wishing to remain loyal to their deeply felt pacifism, vast numbers of Baptists, ordained and lay, laid aside their principles for the duration. Pacificism became the *de facto* creed of the majority. Yet hard as the war was on northern churches - not least, with the loss of many of their young men - the Twenties saw renewed vision for growth and church planting. Whilst not ignoring social issues, the emphasis now lay once again firmly on the need for spiritual growth and expansion.

The Thirties were to prove deeply trying years for the churches of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire. The traditional link between chapel and Liberalism was long-since dead. In the more working-class churches sympathies with the Labour Party had become well-established, whilst the more suburban causes were solidly Conservative. Sellers notes that as a result of this polarisation, the tabling of motions at Assemblies declined noticeably.[25] Plans for church growth and the erection of new buildings were pared down or rejected altogether. Whilst church membership had continued to fall off, considerable numbers of 'sermon tasters' swelled congregations, perhaps - as in South Wales - hiding somewhat the seriousness of the plight facing the churches. The northern churches took on board the vision of both the Discipleship Campaign and the Forward Movement. Yet the gains made were often soon dissipated, not least because of the economic difficulty of supporting ministers. As Sellers puts it: 'So in the industrial North the fine ideals of the "Discipleship Campaign" met the harsh reality of economic depression. The pattern of "three year" churches became established in both counties where a minister would be called and then asked to leave after three years so that the church could

save up for another three years to afford to call another minister.'[26]

By 1936 deep numerical and financial crisis gripped the churches, and a certain introspection settled on them, interspersed with only very occasional concern about international situations, such as that expressed about the Spanish Civil War.[27] Yet even the resolution passed at the Yorkshire Assembly on this occasion, in May 1936, was couched in deeply spiritual (and unrealistic) language. The great social evils of the day were, as ever, conceived to be cinema, drink, immorality and gambling. Debates did take place about the possibility of European war, but when that war finally did break out 'there was no prolonged debate, as there had been twenty-six years earlier, as to the rightness of the conflict. Rather, throughout the churches there was a sad acceptance of the inevitable.'[28]

Beulah Baptist Church, Hollingwood, Oldham

Founded in 1891, Beulah Baptist Church, Hollinwood, Oldham, was set in a once agricultural district which had seen unprecedented change in the late nineteenth century as men and women migrated into the area to work in the nearby pits and mills. The church was founded in the midst of the great cotton and coal disputes of the 1890s, and through these difficult times did much to help relieve the plight of the strikers.[29] Church membership grew rapidly, but losses were also high as the church tried to maintain a disciplined membership. It will be observed that these attempts at resolving the problems associated with 'broad' membership predate those already noted at Brighton Road, South Croydon, by some thirty years.[30] Numbers appear to have surged in the wake of the 1904-05 Welsh Revival and the various national evangelistic ventures launched at that time.[31] The

church leadership also strove to tie the Sunday school as tightly as possible into the main church structure.[32] At this time the church declared itself solidly opposed to the New Theology, and through the influence of its second pastor, William Nield, exhibited a strong disposition for Spurgeonic theology, Nield having been baptised at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Interestingly, Nield involved himself in local politics as a candidate for the Ratepayers' Association at the Council elections in 1903.[33]

Not surprisingly, considering its social setting, financial problems dogged the church from its earliest days.[34] As at both Croham Road and Brighton Road, South Croydon, the annual sale of work was a crucial form of fund-raising, supplementing the church's inadequate weekly income.[35] Financial help from the Association was also essential for the church's well-being. Financial distress was felt as the Great War ran its course, with mass enlistment of young men from the church.[36] Considerable efforts were made to renew contact with these young men once the war ended, but deep issues of principle proved real hurdles to their social integration. Not least - again, as at Brighton Road - disputes niggled on between the church's leadership and the Recreation Club throughout the 1920s.[37] Indeed, in 1925 the Lacrosse Club was refused continued use of the premises.[38] These disputes are ironical in the light of the fact that throughout the early 1920s there had been a steady flow of baptisms from amongst these very groups.

As happened in so many other Baptist churches at the time, Beulah embarked on a major building project in 1926, with the construction of a hall beside the church, at an expected cost of £1,400.[39] Although the extension was paid for by 1930, the church again faced severe financial constraint, and being unable to afford a pastor, took the step of

employing a deaconess, Sister Myrtle Young, for a little under a year from the autumn of 1931.^[40] This proved a time of unprecedented growth, with the Sunday school reaching its highest number since the 1890s, and many young people being baptised.

In 1933 Clifford Kenyon became the minister at Beulah.^[41] He was a well-educated man, having studied for the ministry at Manchester Baptist College. In politics he was radical, having joined the Labour Party in 1922 - as distinct from his family's traditional Liberal allegiance - becoming a Rawtenstall Town Councillor in 1923. He later chaired the Education Committee, in 1938, became Mayor of Rawtenstall, and in 1945 was elected Labour MP for Chorley. Chadwick asserts that his political invective was fuelled by a deep humanitarianism, and a respect for working people. His attitude is, perhaps, best summed up in a key comment in his mayoral sermon, which he preached himself: 'The purpose of religion was not confined to spiritual things, its first and greatest purpose was the recognition that the material things of the world are here in order that human life shall be free from the anxiety by which it is surrounded, and shall be uplifted and ennobled by that spirit which could enter when the mind was free from anxiety and care.'^[42] Significant, however, is the fact that even during Kenyon's ministry there emerged a 'corporate quiescence on economics, war and peace.'^[43] References within the church records indicate an active interest in issues pertaining to the peace debate in the Thirties, yet the church largely avoided public campaigning and debate on issues perceived as political. Similarly, no stance appears to have been articulated on the contemporary economic situation. Chadwick notes diverse oral sources which considered Kenyon's preaching as either 'too political' or 'simply Christian teaching'! Chadwick's own answer to the conundrum of why a church with such a political minister had so little

to say politically is that, for the church as a whole, and for individuals within it, the immediate and over-riding economic concern was with making ends meet.

As at Brighton Road Baptist Church, tensions arose in the Thirties in the church's attitude towards entertainment. The Entertainment Society flourished in the early Thirties, putting on major operettas at regular intervals.^[44] The church had benefited from these productions both financially and in the participation of the Operatic Society and soloists in worship. A deep sense of togetherness had also been fostered within the church through the society. Yet Chadwick points out that a resolution was presented in 1939 seeking to prohibit any form of dancing on church premises. Beetle and whist drives also fell foul of the more conservative members of the church. Interestingly, smoking remained acceptable everywhere on church premises except the sanctuary itself.

By the 1930s removals from the district tended to be over much greater distances. Such comings and goings (largely the latter) were almost invariably associated with the search for work. Lack of finance remained a constant problem for the church at this time, and the church was not averse to spending money on itself under the guise of involvement in wider affairs, as with the purchase of a new organ in 1937 as its contribution to the Baptist Union's Forward Movement - a decision about which the Union was not a little displeased. Many and various fund-raising schemes were introduced, usually aiming to serve a social function as well. Evangelism remained on the agenda, as with the church involvement in a united Baptist mission to Oldham in 1938, yet as noted elsewhere in other churches cited in this thesis, enthusiasm was not a little muted. What additions there were to the membership appear to have occurred irrespective of evangelistic initiatives.

Queen's Road Baptist Church, Coventry

Queen's Road Baptist Church was founded at some time in the 1620s.[45] By the late 1870s it was prosperous both financially and numerically, being able to give away considerable sums of money to overseas causes. The church exercised careful discipline at this time, particularly in cases where there had been lapses in temperance, sexual behaviour or financial probity.[46] This appeal to clear moral imperatives seems to have proved no hindrance to younger people being drawn into the church, their numbers rising rapidly under the ministry of W J Henderson. The latter took up the Presidency of the Bristol Baptist College in 1893, and was succeeded by W E Blomfield in the same year.[47] Blomfield was looked on with suspicion by many in the denomination for his perceived theological 'liberalism.' He had not supported Spurgeon during the Downgrade Controversy, and his Senior Pastor at Elm Road, Beckenham, S H Booth, openly stated his feeling that Blomfield was unsound. The Elm Road church had actually disagreed with the venerable Booth! Yet Queen's Road's choice of Blomfield to be their pastor reflects a slight broadening of the church's theological position.

Queen's Road had always been somewhat backward musically.[48] As late as 1875 the tuning fork had finally been left on one side as a rented harmonium was tried and later purchased. Blomfield made many changes in the content and style of worship, and in 1900 the *Baptist Church Hymnal* was introduced, and widely welcomed. New chants were also introduced at regular intervals. These were exciting days for the church. Services were consistently full, although many of those present were sermon-tasters simply 'doing the rounds' of local churches. With the rise of the Passive Resistance Movement in 1902 the minister and church found themselves in

the midst of controversy, Blomfield leading the way in political activism.[49] Many Nonconformists in Coventry perceived Balfour's Education Bill as Romanist in nature and sympathy, and were not afraid to say so. In the Coventry context, Binfield argues that the strength of Nonconformist reaction in the Passive Resistance Movement highlights three factors: firstly, to some extent the strength of personality clashes in the city was revealed in this issue; secondly, the extent to which teaching had emerged as a major profession amongst Nonconformists became clear at this time because Nonconformist teachers would, by definition, fail the proposed religious tests; thirdly, for Coventry Baptists the events that followed were a 'baptism into social reality,' Nonconformity never regaining the status it had prior to its overt defeat over this issue.[50]

Blomfield removed to the Manchester Baptist College in 1904, and was followed two years later by W W B Emery.[51] Emery's ministry was marked by deep pastoral commitment in the midst of rapid change as Coventry expanded in the wake of the cycle trade. Net membership increased by 73. A graded Sunday school system was introduced, and such evils as Sunday cinema opposed. Emery also continued the long-standing tradition of Liberalism in the church. During the war-time years the church was served by Arthur Dakin. His ministry commenced with membership standing at 596, peaked in 1917 at 656, and declined to 635 when he left.[52] In Dakin the church had another free-thinking, to some minds slightly suspect minister, yet a man whose sincerity and warmth was remembered years later. Two further major ministries followed that of Dakin. In 1920 Laurance Marshall took up the pastorate, and he was followed, in 1926 by Fred Townley Lord.[53] For most of these ten years the church continued to prosper both numerically and financially. Yet neither of these men found their greatest

success at Queen's Road.

The new decade opened for Queen's Road with the appointment of a new minister, Howard Ingli James.^[54] Membership rose steadily during the first five years of James' ministry (from 713 in 1930, to a peak of 783 in 1935), but fell back slowly in the eight remaining years of his ministry (657 in 1943). As in Park Road Baptist Church, Rushden, which is considered below, numerical decline set in with a vengeance only in the later 1940s. The years of James' ministry were also marked by financial difficulties arising from a number of factors: the church was engaging in newer, more costly ministries; unemployment in Coventry was rising rapidly; the membership was, on average, younger than had previously been the case; the considerable body of Welsh members sent money home to their even more hard-pressed families in South Wales. Indeed, their pastor was also was Welsh in origin, and moved on to become South Wales General Superintendent in 1946. Yet Queen's Road also faced challenges unheard of in the South Wales valleys. As Binfield puts it: '...Queen's Road was at the confluence of a car owning, cinema going, drinking, football pool filling society.'^[55]

During these years the church explored the key theme of Christian community and citizenship. Emphasis was placed on the needs of young people, and the church's Sunday school work (which was moved to the morning) almost exclusively served the church's own children. James frequently preached on issues pertaining to economics and unemployment, especially when Coventry was in some way affected. He had a vision for the Kingdom of God on earth and a Christian conscience sensitive to the social, political and economic implications of the Gospel. His political radicalism served as a powerful draw to many, and such was the manner in which his ideas were presented that he managed to take many of his more

politically-Conservative members with him, and even when they could not agree with their pastor they seemed able to differ one from the other with Christian tolerance and graciousness.

As has been consistently observed throughout this thesis, there were social issues on which the church spoke strongly. Sunday cinema and sport were vigorously opposed, although James saw both activities as gifts from God away from Sundays. Deep concern was expressed and long debates took place over the issue of gambling (in the form of whist drives and football pools), and the nature of brewery advertising. Significantly, drama was much used for entertainment at Queen's Road, the church having a flourishing Drama Society. Yet here too there was a conservative reaction in 1933 over the content of a play performed by the society. James took the blame personally, and the Church Meeting agreed to the censoring of future productions. The same issue arose in March 1934 and January 1935. The church was, however, far from negative in its response to growing unemployment. As has been noted earlier in this thesis, Queen's Road opened a pioneering centre for the unemployed in the early Thirties which, amongst other ministries, cared for more than 50 men over the age of 60 years.[56]

Finally, as the Second World War approached, James maintained his absolute pacifism, whilst also condemning the evils of dictatorship. In this he was joined by many in the church (Binfield goes so far as to describe Queen's Road as '...a predominantly pacifist church'),[57] more than forty men registering as conscientious objectors on the outbreak of hostilities. James preached long and hard the need for trust in God in the dark days of the Thirties. At least one exiled German pastor - Otto Piper - preached at Queen's Road during this period.[58]

Avenue Baptist Church, Southend

Avenue Baptist Church, Southend, was founded in the summer of 1876. For the next ten years it experienced considerable growth which was twice hampered by schism,[59] Between 1889 and 1898 new growth was experienced under E J Dyer, and at this time the membership kept pace with local population growth. The church involved itself in moves towards greater Nonconformist unity, but put most of its effort into teaching and evangelism.[60] Also in the 1890s, the church faced a quite severe financial crisis which tended to cause greater introspection and an emphasis on fund-raising events. Significantly, in 1894, 66% of the church's 130 members were female, and by 1896, 71% of the 175 members were female.[61] In social composition, there is a suggestion that most heads of families in the congregation were shop workers, small tradesmen or apartment keepers. By 1911 the Baptists in Southend had become a major political pressure group, and reflected the power of local Nonconformist solidarity at the time. Membership had also risen dramatically under the ministry of James McCleary, rising from 141 in 1900 to a peak of 479 in 1909. Several factors account for this growth: the population was increasing rapidly, the pastor was a warm and winsome man, his preaching was clear and down-to-earth, evangelism was at the top of the church's agenda, the pew rent system had been abolished to a limited extent, a direct-giving policy had been introduced, and the church was rich in lay leaders.[62]

In the early years of the twentieth century the church also ran a range of social activities, with a Brotherhood group, a poor fund for members and a rapidly growing Sunday school. The local hospital was supported financially and in kind, and cared for troops wounded in the Boer War.

Firm support was offered for the Passive Resistance Movement, and McCleary was summonsed for the non-payment of rates, although he was cleared on a technicality.^[63] Support for Passive Resistance petered out by the eve of the Great War.

Gilbert Laws became minister in 1912. Laws had been trained at Spurgeon's College, and following several short pastorates, came to Avenue on the recommendation of Thomas Phillips of Bloomsbury. As in other churches, there were many membership transfers at this time, yet, on balance, Avenue gained far more than it lost. Despite this apparent success, Laws constantly reminded the membership of the need for Christian character, on one occasion concluding: 'With such a variety of meetings and societies we are apt to forget the Church which is the parent of them all. Let the strongest interest be in the Church itself.'^[64] Clearly, Laws was prepared to enunciate what many of his contemporaries felt, that church organisations could be a mixed blessing! By 1918 the church membership stood at 435.

During the Great War the church's Literary Society became the forum for the discussion of contemporary public issues. A cricket club was formed, the Boys' Brigade widened its club activities, and the Brotherhood, Sunday school, Mothers' Meeting and Band of Hope all continued their social function. On the charitable front, 18 children from the East End were provided with holidays, and 100 local poor children were provided with an annual free tea.^[65] It was at this period, June 1916, that F B Meyer was due to preach at the church, but in the event a visit to France precluded the visit. Similarly in 1917 arrangements for a visit from W Y Fullerton had to be cancelled at the last minute. In 1922 Gilbert Laws' ministry closed with his move to West Croydon Baptist Church.

Laws was followed by J N Britton of Clapham. During his 13 years at the

church 845 new members were added. The church was able to take on vast financial commitments - largely associated with various building projects - and still managed to raise £1,026 towards the Forward Movement appeal. Britton was active in calling for fair discussions during the 1926 Miners' Strike, and the church broadened its programme of care for the less fortunate members of society.[66] In 1933 a club was opened for 78 unemployed men.

Britton left the church to become Baptist Union National Commissioner for Evangelism in 1935. His successor, W B Stapley, was another Spurgeon's man, 'a preacher in the passionate evangelical mould which Avenue had come to expect.'[67] Whilst the church saw additions, it also adopted a policy of strict pruning of the membership role, so that the 1936 membership of 707 was reduced to 633 by 1939. The figures for 1936 represent the peak membership level in the church's life to date. This decade also saw the church's financial situation darkening. Mr Stapley's commencement stipend of £450 was £100 less than that offered to J N Britton in 1922. The manse was mortgaged, and few invoices could be paid on time. As at Croham Road, South Croydon, a mission hall supported by Avenue was asked to undertake its own financial arrangements.[68]

Finally, as the Second World War broke out the church suffered immensely from Southend being designated by Government Emergency Order as an area to be evacuated by the civilian population in the event of enemy invasion. Yet despite the rapid decline in membership that ensued, the church responded in establishing a care centre for servicemen.

Brentwood Baptist Church

The church at Brentwood was one of many churches in Essex that benefitted from the wider ministry of Theo Bamber when he was at Frinton from 1921 to 1926. Bamber was, in fact, a major figure in evangelical Baptist life from the early Twenties through to the Sixties. His significance lies in his insistence on the importance of separation from the world, purity of life, and keen anticipation of the *parousia*. His concern for these ideas led him into the leadership of the Advent Testimony and Preparation Movement (along with Lindsay Glegg).^[69] He also founded the Baptist Revival Fellowship which emerged in the 1930s '...out of the informal meetings of a group of London Baptist ministers who were burdened by the low level of spiritual life in the churches.'^[70] One of his close companions in this ministry - which was anti-ecumenical, anti-Baptist Union bureaucracy, and anti-liturgy - was Archibald Brown of the East London Tabernacle.

During the early Twenties monthly Keswick meetings were a regular feature of church life at Brentwood. A new building programme was put in hand in 1925 at an estimated cost of £1,200, and its membership peaked at 116 in 1926.^[71] By 1931 membership had fallen to 91, in part because of a tightening of membership criteria which had been built into the church rules in 1930. From this time on the church roll was regularly pruned and active discipline was practiced.

The church would not allow on its premises any games of chance, specifically forbidding billiards and bagatelle, the key argument against such activities being that the church was the place '...where the Lord's honour dwelleth.'^[72] In terms of caring ministry, the Brentwood church offered support for the unemployed in 1921, sent gifts to Russian relief

charities in 1923, and offered support to the wives and children of miners in 1926 and 1929.[73] Regular financial help was offered to those of the fellowship suffering hardship through sickness.

By the early Thirties the church had become reliant on the Sustentation Fund, and heavy debts had accrued by 1933. The Keswick meetings also faltered at this time, finally ceasing by mid-decade. Some of the church's defaulters actually left to join Pentecostal groups locally. Clearly, the church's introduction of chanted 'Amens' and Lord's Prayer, the involvement of a choir and the singing of vespers did not satisfy their longing for a deeply personal spirituality. Under the ministry of Tommy Hughes some resurgence of the work took place, membership rising from 68 in 1934 to 83 a year later.[74] Yet financial constraints had, by then, become so serious that at the end of his first 5-year term of service the pastor was not reappointed. A deep depression had settled on the church with the morning congregation halving between 1934 and 1937.[75] Brentwood serves as a classic case of a Baptist church facing arrested progress as a result of the complex of pressures exerted upon it in the 1930s.

Park Road Baptist Church, Rushden, Northants

The Baptist cause at Rushden dates from about 1722. Its early history is well-told by G E Bates in his, *These Years Have Told: The Story of Park Road Baptist Church, Rushden*.^[76] By the mid-nineteenth century there were three Baptist churches in the rapidly growing village. The pastor of the largest church, 'Old Top Meeting,' was Jonathan Whittemore who edited, published and printed *The Baptist Messenger*.^[77] He also began printing pioneering books of hymns for Nonconformist worship - a project that brought him financial ruin and imprisonment in 1848. Leaving Rushden in

1851, he went on to found *The Christian World* in 1857 and *The Sunday School Times* in 1860. These points are crucial, for they show just how committed was the pastor of Rushden to the rising tide of Nonconformity. As the century continued Rushden forged links with C H Spurgeon, and saw spectacular growth both in numbers and in influence. By 1880 the membership had reached 185, the Sunday school having 260 scholars (rising to 340 within 4 years). The membership actually peaked temporarily in 1894. Ancillary organisations were formed during this period, the Christian Endeavour bringing many of them under one umbrella in that same year. In 1900 work began on a new church building in Park Road, the new church standing as a fitting monument - having 'distinctive beauty' - to the arrival of Nonconformity as a force to be reckoned with.^[78] Indeed, no less a Nonconformist than John Clifford preached at the morning service of dedication.

Not surprisingly, the church was active in campaigning on traditional Nonconformist issues such as Temperance, and following the advent of the Passive Resistance Movement the pastor (W F Harris) and many members suffered distraint for non-payment of their rates. The church meeting at this time also passed resolutions on the Turkish oppression of Macedonia, the importation of Chinese labour into the Transvaal, and the opium traffic. Collections were made for the unemployed, and a Men's Own - akin to PSA groups - met on Sunday afternoons. The first decade of the new century thus saw the church in good heart, a thriving, outspoken Nonconformist cause.

At the induction of the new minister, H J Horn, in 1910, the old ties with evangelicalism were re-affirmed through the preaching of John Wilson of Woolwich and C H Spurgeon's son, Thomas. Later in the year further guest speakers preached, including the Baptist worthies Charles Brown and

Carey Bonner. By now Sunday school numbers had passed the 700-mark. Fifty people were baptised that winter, and branch churches were formed in nearby villages. Horn's emphasis on Bible teaching permeated every facet of the church's life at this period. No evidence has been found for the church having links with the Keswick movement at this time, but as at Croham Road, South Croydon, the general ethos and the particular emphasis on guest preachers ministering to the spiritual life serve as secondary evidence for such influence. Additionally, it may be noted that on at least one occasion the guest speaker at the Leicester Free Church Council (1920), of which the church was a member, was none other than F B Meyer. On that particular occasion the preacher's focus on the collapse of society (with a wave of crime, the growth of a profiteer-aristocracy, relaxation of morals, growth in dancing, cinema-attendance and alcohol consumption, labour and financial crises, war, pestilence, famine, and anarchy) echoed his oft-heard Keswick platform teaching, moving on as it did to call for a deeper spirituality and greater sense of other-worldliness.^[79] The war years were, of course, trying for the church, but the most severe shock came with the removal of the minister in response to a call from Rye Lane Baptist Church, Peckham, to which Theo Bamber would be called in 1926. Also at this time there was a noticeable strengthening of the church's Temperance position, no doubt in response to the wartime call of the King to that end. Following the war, cricket, hockey and tennis clubs were formed to help provide suitable entertainment for the returned men of the town, a decision which provoked not a little dissent within the church.^[80]

In 1922 J A Sutherland of Brighton Road, South Croydon, accepted a call to Rushden. Yet again the Spurgeonian influence of the pastor was to dominate the church ethos. In that year special guest speakers included H

Tydeman Chilvers (Metropolitan Tabernacle) and S W Hughes (Westbourne Park) amongst others. Still the work flourished, although by 1930 financial strain in the form of a major refurbishment of the church buildings was beginning to be felt.^[81] Yet growth in the church's commitments to other causes continued. Involvement in the Baptist Union Discipleship Campaign and Forward Movement appears to have been unreserved, and a most successful campaign under the auspices of the Free Church Council and using the services of Rev Lionel Fletcher took place in 1937, resulting in 24 more baptisms at Park Road.

During this period the church's worship style had become grander through the powerful influence of its choirmaster, Bernard Tomkins. Choir festivals, oratorios and orchestra had become commonplace, although, significantly, unlike other churches studied in this thesis, little dissension appears to have been caused by these changes. The only group which was in decline by the 1930s was the Band of Hope. This parallels the decline noted in several other churches of the period. Significantly, the minister since 1930, T W Gill, left Rushden in 1939 to take up the pastorate at Twynholm Hall Baptist Church, Fulham, which was itself endowed and strongly influenced by R W Black.

From this cursory overview of the history of the Park Road church it will be readily noted that its ethos and development paralleled in many areas those of other churches considered in this thesis. It maintained solid evangelical links throughout the hundred years from the 1840s. Indeed, its evangelical pedigree might be considered impeccable. The church also fitted easily into the general Nonconformist traditions of the period. The same campaigning issues arose just as the church's responses to changing circumstances reflected those seen elsewhere. Also, it may be observed that little political engagement appears to have taken place once

the Passive Resistance Movement had run its course. From the information available it would be impossible to discern why political engagement became apparently unimportant. The ministers in the 1910s and 1920s were crucial in stamping an evangelical apoliticalism on the church. Certainly, Sutherland showed no interest in politics when at Brighton Road, South Croydon, and nor did H J Horn in his succeeding ministry at Rye Lane, Peckham. Indeed, if Rye Lane's choice of successor to Horn - in the person of Theo Bamber - is indicative of the ethos he left behind, then Horn's influence on the church may be claimed to be solidly spiritual, evangelical, but apolitical.

In fact, the long-feared decline eventually set in at Park Road during and after the Second World War. Geographical and cultural isolation may well have been the key factors in protecting the church from the crises which most of their co-religionists had been forced to face much earlier in the century. By 1951 the membership was around 380, but the minister, A S Arnold, clearly sensed that the church's standing was not going to last much longer. The previous decade had seen a marked shift in the church's sense of identity. He could note that several long-standing factors had brought the church to a crisis point. Firstly, 'the popularization of science' had brought with it the idea that the findings of science are diametrically opposed to the beliefs of the Christian church.^[82] So too, 'Science has brought an easier, fuller life to the people, and it is hard to convince them that man does not live by bread alone.' Secondly, people were far better off than they had ever been before. Yet the coming of state-organised welfare 'has denied our Churches that field of service and witness which benevolent work afforded.' Arnold added rather bitterly: 'The fact that the Churches were the pioneers of welfare organizations and their main supporters is soon forgotten.' Thirdly, the appeal of modern

entertainment such as films, radio, television and commercial sport were a most powerful attraction to the masses. Rushden had put vast resources into meeting just these social and entertainment needs, but now they had no hope of competing at the level offered by secular organisations.

There is something uncanny in reading these comments dating from 1951. They take one back unremittingly to the first chapter of this thesis and the debates facing the Nonconformist denominations in the crucial period after 1910. Clearly, these local studies indicate that for Baptists in the first half of the twentieth century, the search for a clear sense of identity and relevance in a rapidly changing world was a persistent urge, whether it came at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century (as it did for the denominational leadership and some churches), in the 1920s and 1930s (as it did for many churches), or post-World War Two (as it clearly was for others). The chronological focus may be seen to have shifted from church to church, even, from area to area, but the issues remained the same. A fuller discussion of these changes follows in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Footnotes to Chapter 11:

1. B P Jones, *Sowing Beside all Waters - the Baptist Heritage of Gwent* (Gwent, 1985).
2. *ibid*, Cap 7, 'Chapel buildings: A task of costly devotion,' pp 93ff; Cap 13, 'The Major Departments of the Baptist Chapels, Section A: Sunday Schools, 1890-1934,' pp 234ff; Cap 17, 'Gwent Baptist Churches in the Days of Crisis,' pp 314ff.
3. *ibid*, p 314.
4. *ibid*, p 320.
5. *ibid*, p 239.
6. *ibid*, p 300.
7. *ibid*, pp 303f.
8. *ibid*, p 304.
9. *ibid*, pp 240ff.
10. *ibid*, pp 311ff.
11. *ibid*, p 318.
12. *ibid*, pp 320 ff.
13. *ibid*, pp 288f.
14. *ibid*, p 320.
15. ed I Sellers, *Our Heritage: The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and*

- Cheshire, 1647-1987* (Leeds, 1987), pp 9f.
16. *ibid*, p 61. For detailed statistical information on the Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire Associations, see pp 160ff.
 17. *ibid*, p 62.
 18. *ibid*, pp 73f.
 19. cf Sellers' statistical survey, *ibid*, pp 69f.
 20. *ibid*, p 75.
 21. *ibid*, p 77.
 22. *ibid*, pp 80f.
 23. *ibid*, p 81. This concise paragraph gives a superb review of changes in theological ideas at this time.
 24. *ibid*, pp 84f.
 25. *ibid*, p 93.
 26. *ibid*, p 96.
 27. *ibid*, p 98.
 28. *ibid*, p 103.
 29. R Chadwick, *'Persistent Efforts and Untiring Labours: Beulah Baptist Church, Hollinwood, Oldham, 1891-1991'* (Oldham, 1991), pp 11f.
 30. *ibid*, pp 15, 22.
 31. *ibid*, p 22.
 32. *ibid*, p 15.
 33. *ibid*, p 20.
 34. See: *ibid*, pp 13, 18,
 35. *ibid*, p 21.
 36. *ibid*, p 24.
 37. *ibid*, pp 25f.
 38. *ibid*, pp 26f.
 39. *ibid*, pp 27ff.
 40. *ibid*, pp 29ff.
 41. *ibid*, pp 32ff.
 42. *Rossendale Free Press*, 19/11/38 p 10.
 43. Personal correspondence with Dr R Chadwick.
 44. Chadwick, *'Persistent Efforts and Untiring Labours'*, pp 34ff.
 45. C Binfield, *Pastors and People: The Biography of a Baptist Church, Queen's Road, Coventry* (Coventry, 1984), p 11.
 46. *ibid*, p 92,
 47. cf *ibid*, Cap 6, '"Edwardian Boanerges:" William Ernest Blomfield, 1893-1904,' pp 99ff.
 48. *ibid*, p 91.
 49. cf *ibid*, Cap 7, '"Citizenship on the Borderland of Violence:" Queen's Road and the Passive Resistance Movement,' pp 119ff.
 50. *ibid*, p 136.
 51. For the wider influence of Blomfield on northern churches see: Sellers, *Our Heritage*, pp 63, 79, 81. For details of Emery's brief ministry, see: Binfield, *Pastors and People*, Cap 8, 'Emery's Day of Life, 1906-1913,' pp 139ff.
 52. See: Binfield, *Pastors and People*, Cap 9, '"The Facts of the Gospel still stand:" Arthur Dakin and a Church at War, 1913-1919,' pp 158ff.
 53. See: *ibid*, Cap 10, 'Contrasts: Laurance Marshall and Townley Lord: Queen's Road, 1920-1930,' pp 182ff.
 54. For details of this extraordinary man and his equally remarkable ministry at Queen's Road, See: *ibid*, Cap 11, 'Ingli, 1931-1943. Part I: Sunday Morning Eye View,' pp 202ff; Cap 12, 'Ingli, 1931-1943. Part II: "Face and Voice and Atmosphere,' pp 224ff; Cap 13, 'Ingli, 1931-1943. Part III: From the Gallery of the World,' pp 244ff.
 55. *ibid*, p 213.
 56. *ibid*, pp 213ff.

57. *ibid*, p 254.
58. *ibid*, pp 216ff.
59. D J Jeremy, J Barfield, K S Newman, *A Century of Grace: The History of Avenue Baptist Church, Southend-on-Sea, 1876-1976* (Southend, 1982), pp 6ff.
60. *ibid*, p 26.
61. *ibid*, pp 29f.
62. *ibid*, pp 38ff.
63. *ibid*, pp 50ff.
64. *ibid*, p 56.
65. *ibid*, pp 58ff.
66. *ibid*, pp 66ff.
67. *ibid*, p 76.
68. *ibid*, pp 78f.
69. Unattributed, *Twenty-One Years at Rye Lane Chapel* (Private publication, Peckham, 1947), p 12. cf Glegg, *Four Score...and More*, pp 53, 87.
70. Baptist Revival Fellowship booklet, *Liberty in the Lord: Comment on trends in Baptist thought today* (London, 1964), inside front cover. Bamber's Keswick, Advent Testimony Preparation Movement and Baptist Revival Fellowship links are all highlighted on p 16. cf his obituary in the *Baptist Handbook: 1971* (London), p 376.
71. D M Acton, *A History of Brentwood Baptist Church* (Brentwood, 1986), pp 71f.
72. *ibid*, p 84.
73. *ibid*, pp 84ff.
74. *ibid*, pp 72, 92.
75. *ibid*, p 99ff.
76. G E Byres, *These Years Have Told: The Story of Park Road Baptist Church, Rushden* (Rushden, 1951).
77. *ibid*, pp 27ff.
78. *ibid*, p 53.
79. Cited in *ibid*, p 75.
80. *ibid*, p 72.
81. *ibid*, p 83.
82. *ibid*, pp 100ff.

Conclusions: Crisis, Change and Reassessment

As the first chapter of this thesis demonstrated, the context for the present study lies in the forty years beginning in the late-1880s. We have seen that in British Baptist circles the years 1898 to 1906 were popularly perceived as years of growth and spiritual vitality. This period of apparent health paralleled the highpoint of political and social influence of Nonconformity in general, and indeed, of the 'idealised friend' of Nonconformity, the Parliamentary Liberal Party. Baptist numbers had seemingly continued to increase for much of this period; a new headquarters had been opened and a thriving and expanding bureaucracy controlled central Baptist affairs. Baptists were also leaders in dissent, most notably over such issues as the Boer War and the later Passive Resistance Movement. Yet by 1907, at the very height of their perceived power, many of their key opinion-formers were shocked to discover a fall in membership of the churches. This decline had, in fact, been gathering pace for more than a decade, masked, however, by the use of limited statistical techniques which had failed to detect specifically the actual numerical decline of the denomination as a proportion of the British population.

The reasons for decline were many and varied, and as distinct entities hardly provide an adequate explanation for the phenomenon. Yet taken together they provided a powerful corrosive to the amalgam of Baptist life. The increasing social standing of Baptists tended to separate them still further than was already the case from the working classes. Indeed, this thesis concurs with the widely-held scholarly view that Baptists in the late-Victorian period had never really been the church of the working classes. This general evidence becomes even more overwhelming when one

considers the sparsity of working-class members of diaconates. The accolade for being the denomination of the working-classes must rest largely with the Primitive Methodists, later joined, of course, by the Salvation Army. Parallelling the decline in the already small working-class involvement in Baptist church life was the rise of the Labour Party, providing as it did an ideological and 'spiritual' home for those members of the working classes disenchanted with the church. Social dependence upon the churches was also weakening as many of the social evils of the day were ameliorated through Parliamentary legislation. Indeed, Baptist thinkers already saw the danger to their vested interest which was inherent in the State taking over social care functions from the churches. Baptist links with the young were also weakening as the Sunday school system to which they were so committed and into which they had poured such vast resources of time, manpower and money, itself entered on a time of uncertainty, change and decline. Baptists, themselves, meanwhile, were becoming more inward looking, delving again into the pool of theological debate, yet, paradoxically, living also in constant fear of a new Downgrade Controversy.

Theological controversy and division continued to be prominent in Baptist circles during the fateful period of the second decade of the twentieth century. The issues under debate were many and varied, but outstanding amongst them were those attendant on the rise of the ecumenical movement and the alleged under- or over-politicisation of the church. The debates were further compounded, to some extent at least, by the continued rapid growth in the influence of the Keswick Movement and allied holiness-driven, apolitical theologies with their tendency to promote a disengagement from national affairs. Clearly the First World War also left its dark cloud over the entire era, and a further fundamental

change occurred with the collapse of the great Nonconformist link with Christian pacifism, giving way to a war in defence of Christendom.

Although Baptist numbers showed a slight resurgence in the early 1920s they soon dropped dramatically. The denomination was in a state of deep confusion, indeed, crisis, as to its identity within the wider world of both Nonconformity and of British social life in general. Yet the evidence suggests that the denomination's leaders appear not to have been fully aware of the depth of confusion that had already begun to take hold amongst their wider constituency.

During the specific period under consideration in this thesis the Baptist denomination went through a period of reassessment and realignment in most spheres of its life. Yet it has been argued here that such analysis tended to remain both superficial and inadequate. This should perhaps come as no surprise. In the 1930s English and Welsh Baptists, like other Christians, were confronted with a decade of profound, if regionally-varied, social crisis, poverty and deprivation. This was compounded by international upheaval which the 'war to end all wars' had psychologically declared to be impossible. Not only had the old verities slipped away, but new crises befell the churches even before a new perspective had been attained.

This thesis first considered this continuing crisis as it affected the thinking and policies of the national leadership of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. On matters political, the leadership of the Baptist Union had become very cautious, almost invariably offering support to the various Governments of the day. This conservatism in political viewpoint was the result of the interaction of several factors. Some of the newer leaders had less faith in the ability of politicians to deliver their promises to pressure groups such as the Free Churches. In part this

realism had been forced upon the churches by the disappointing behaviour of Lloyd George. Not only had the Liberal Party been unable or unwilling to offer to Nonconformity the advantages promised for their support in the 1906 General Election and subsequently, but Lloyd George's marital unfaithfulness was also by the 1930s an open secret. Thus, if a politician so closely linked with the Nonconformist Conscience could let down the cause so dramatically, how could Nonconformists ever again fully trust another political leader? On the other hand, the Baptist presence of Ernest Brown within the cabinet, Geoffrey Shakespeare on its fringes, and the 'Christian' presence of Baldwin, MacDonald and others in the leadership of the nation served to convince many Baptist opinion-formers - most notably, M E Aubrey - that support for the National Government was the safest policy. Indeed, the present research has shown that in addition to its positive support for the National Government and expressed concern at the state of Liberalism, the Baptist Union leadership presented a specifically negative view of the Labour Party. It has also been argued in Chapter 4 of this thesis that the debates surrounding the launch of the Council of Action in 1935 provide confirmation of this assertion. Aubrey and, later, Carlile saw the Council of Action as an opportunist move by Lloyd George to create a multi-party grouping centring on his personality which would fill the void left by the effective Parliamentary demise of the Liberal Party. They felt, however, that support for the existing Government, doing a comparatively good job in a difficult situation, was greatly to be preferred to a romantic return to an uncertain Liberal past or a rash move to an uncertain Socialist future.

Turning to the question of social involvement, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that, in general terms, Baptists in the 1930s appear to have done their best to respond to local needs, although it must be

emphasised that for most churches this response was nevertheless very limited. The financial pressures facing the churches, coupled with their loss of direction, meant that issues of internal organisation, not to say survival, predominated. Issues perceived to be important did come under debate both nationally and locally, but these were generally topics associated with old dissent - now increasingly irrelevant to the rapidly-changing society of the 1930s. Newer social issues such as unemployment received, in comparison, much less attention. It is most unlikely that this was due to cold heartlessness. Rather, it should be seen as a reflection of confusion and uncertainty about the changed Baptist role in society. What is quite clear is that the denominational opinion-formers saw no easy answers to these complex changes and were adamant that no one political party had those answers either. That said, there was also a tendency among many Baptist leaders to view all classes in Britain as enjoying unprecedented prosperity which would have to be foregone for a while, even if the comparative level of prosperity left much to be desired. At the same time, it is equally important to note the frustration felt by many Free Church people that they were no longer strong enough to impose their social viewpoint on wider British society, only to ensure a great deal of ill-will, together with psychological separation between their approved social world and that of the national consensus.

In the context of policy pertaining to international relations, the Baptist leadership was by no means united in its views on the crucial fundamental issues of war and peace. As the Thirties began, there remained a fond attachment to the ideals of pacifism. Yet those ideals were no longer easy to maintain. Free Church support for the Great War had undermined much pacifist confidence. Indeed, one may wonder how solidly pacifist the broad body of Free Church people had ever been. What is

clear, however, is that as early as 1932 the Baptist leadership - and substantial numbers of 'ordinary' church members - were moving to a solidly pacificistic position. War remained an evil to their minds, yet this thesis has demonstrated that it might sometimes be a necessary evil. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria - with all its attendant implications for Western missionary involvement in the country - was a seminal event in Baptist thinking on international affairs at both local and central levels. From this point on the leadership of the Baptist Union became more and more aware of sinister changes in the accepted world order. Through the medium of the denominational journal they also tried to spread that awareness without actually creating what they considered to be the equally sinister horror of war-mindedness. The rise to power of Hitler in 1932, the militaristic growth of Germany (and the oppression of some elements of the German Church), and the rise of other dictatorships served to break even further the will of pure pacifism within the denomination. The field was then clear for pacificism to become the normative moral stance on issues of war and peace. The move to pacificism had a profound effect on the presentation of news and views within the denominational journal. Without the premise that war was always and ever wrong the various writers could range widely in their critique of German affairs and in presenting suggested responses for the British government.

Baptist apprehension of international affairs must be viewed squarely, then, within the context of the move towards overt pacificism. For the leaders of English and Welsh Baptist thinking, mid-decade proved to be the second crucial turning point in their thinking on international issues. Indeed, 1935 marked the precise point at which they were forced to accept that international affairs were bad and getting rapidly worse. In the German context, although they had earlier argued for the repealing of the

military clauses of the Versailles Treaty, when Hitler actually did this in March 1935 they were largely horrified. One might suggest that their sense of fair play was tested to the extreme by this development.

Additionally, and crucially, the public concern of English and Welsh Baptists for their co-religionists in Germany dated back to 1933. Once again, an increase in interest can be discerned in the Spring of 1935. Events in the German churches found their focus in the arrest, trial and imprisonment of Pastor Niemöller. The comparative lack of coverage of Karl Barth's position may indicate that, with the assertiveness of a strong conservative evangelicalism in Britain, Barth was considered too radical for many Baptist minds at this point in time. The developments in the German Church Struggle in general, however, confirmed the already-prevailing concerns of many Baptists about Hitler's long-term intentions.

This thesis has also demonstrated that the concern expressed by the Baptist leadership at the rise of the German dictatorship was extended to the other fascist dictatorships of the time. In the case of Italy this concern was expressed as early as 1935. As the situation in Abyssinia worsened the *Baptist Times* moved to an overtly anti-Italian position. This was linked to a latent and long-standing mistrust of the Vatican and Roman Catholicism in general. Significantly, it was in the light of the Abyssinian Crisis that the *Baptist Times* began actively to support and even promote British re-armament. Again, the ideological move from pacifism to pacificism had paved the way for such a marked change of stance. Similarly, concern expressed by Baptists over the war in Spain was again expressed against the more worrying backdrop of developments in Germany. Perceived Vatican complicity again led Baptists to attack the Pope for his weakness in international affairs. In this increasingly volatile, and hence, pragmatic climate the League of Nations was seen as an abject

failure. The one great international force for peace - as many Baptists saw it - had been shown to be finally and irretrievably impotent when it was most needed.

Although Baptists had had a long-standing concern for their co-religionists in Eastern Europe, it is clear also that by the mid-Thirties concerns about these religious and political problems were rapidly being eclipsed by those in the West. Possibly, the increasing rapport between Hitler and Stalin served to destroy much innate sympathy felt for Russia by Free Churchmen in general. Certainly, so far as the official and semi-official Baptist documents studied in this present work are concerned, what expressed sympathy there was for Baptists in Eastern Europe tended to be focussed on Romania in particular. The most notable exception to this general rule was J H Rushbrooke who worked, travelled and wrote tirelessly for the cause of religious freedom in Eastern Europe.

Finally, Baptists had a continuing interest in Indian affairs at this time, but thinking on Indian issues in general, and Gandhi in particular, was mixed, even muddled. What is clear, though, is that English Baptists, at least, were in favour of Dominion Status being granted to the sub-continent. As in so many other international issues, the religious dimension obtruded, with considerable debate ensuing about the religious presuppositions of such Indian leaders as Gandhi. Again, also as in the cases of Eastern Europe and China, by the late-1930s national concern over events in Western Europe had eclipsed wider, traditional international concerns. Local church studies have shown no evidence of expressed concern on this issue at any time in the Thirties.

It may be argued, then, that during the 1930s it was seemingly quite impossible for Baptists to view any particular issue, whether national or international, as merely political in nature. The religious dimension was

never far away. In international affairs in particular, it is clear that for many key Baptist thinkers, and also for many 'ordinary' Baptists of the time, it may be concluded that positions were generally taken on the basis of 'What would be best for Protestant Christianity in that country?' To that extent, at least, Baptist thinking and speaking on these issues may be said to have exhibited a certain underlying consistency.

A further factor was also at work conditioning Baptist responses in the 1930s, namely their almost obsessive preoccupation with arresting the decline in numbers within the Baptist churches. This concern might be construed to indicate that the Baptist churches were in fear of losing their hard-earned social status if their numbers - and hence, their voting power - continued to decline. Yet, in fact, this thesis has demonstrated that by the Thirties power and status had effectively already gone. Whilst the numerical decline of the denomination continued to be the over-riding concern for its leadership, and some rationalisation of the causes is apparent, few in leadership appear to have openly faced and enunciated the hard fact that real decline - as assessed against the national population - was no new trend. Rather, it had become the norm during the 1890s and throughout the twentieth century. Yet the debates engendered by the continuing decline in denominational membership could have been valuable if they had forced upon Baptists the unreality of their present state and supposed status. Some such realisation did occur, as the local studies within this thesis indicate. Yet they tended to be limited to discussion on the nature of church membership and the rationalisation of church rolls. At long last it was becoming clear that many who had previously regarded themselves as Baptists were actually no more than nominal in their allegiance. Not unrelated to this point, the full extent of the social catastrophe that was the Great War was also beginning to be

realised. The impact had been most forceful in that broad body of the populace affected by 'diffusive Christianity,' the classic 'fringe attenders' or 'adherents.'

One must further ask whether Baptist concern and confusion over denominational decline and its causes also distracted them from social and political engagement, or whether, in fact, their weakening political and social voice was itself a factor in their numerical decline. The balance of argument in this thesis would rest with the former. By the nineteen thirties the denomination was clearly facing an identity crisis. Whether or not the average church member was fully aware of the changed religious climate, the leadership of the denomination could see that change most clearly, even if they were largely powerless either to understand it fully or to redress it. In turn, their concern lay more with finding a new identity for the denomination and thus, hopefully, moving back to a policy of growth - or even simply holding current numbers - than in seeking to regain major political influence.

The leadership of the Baptist Union in the 1930s thus continued the by then trends whereby the 'old' allegiances and certainties declined and issues of 'personal' conversion and morality came to predominate. Their role had become largely one of trying to keep together, and in good heart, a denomination that had lost its former distinctive identity and perhaps even its very *raison d'être*. The Baptist movement which entered the Thirties was a significantly different organism from that which, but a quarter of a century previously, had been on the verge of sharing a national assumption of authority in the name of Nonconformity. The years that followed witnessed the further outworking of this critical change as the denomination's leaders at both national and local levels attempted to redefine their place in the social order.

Turning to the local church studies in Croydon it can readily be seen that the two local Baptist churches examined in detail in this thesis were struggling to maintain some sense of self-identity. As the Borough continued its growth, so many of the older social and religious ties became strained. In microcosm, this strain can be seen in the debates over the Sunday opening of cinemas. Significantly, on a borough-wide level the debate witnessed increasing division between Nonconformists and Anglicans. It may fairly be asserted that the intensity of religious concern over the issue of Sunday cinema stood in sharp contrast to the relatively slight concern expressed over other social issues such as unemployment and attendant social deprivation.

Being evangelical in ethos, the Croham Road Church had a strongly spiritual and evangelistic emphasis, although how effective the church's evangelistic programme was remains debatable. Its attempts to arrest decline were largely unsuccessful. The church also had little time or, one may suggest, energy, for engagement in the great social debates of the day - either the older issues of Temperance and Sunday observance, the latter reflected in newer form as the Sunday cinema debate, or the more pertinent debates surrounding the slump. On the issues of Temperance and the Sunday opening of cinemas the church was clearly in sympathy with the conservative viewpoint, but carefully steered clear of making public pronouncements on the issues. It may perhaps be suggested that at Croham Road, at least, a certain tolerance or resignation to the state of affairs pertaining in wider British society had become a hallmark by the Thirties. Significantly, the church's practical social commitment tended to be local in extent. The church clearly had tight financial constraints of its own, and it was, therefore, thought wise to give only to those charities and causes with which its members could the more readily identify and which

they might one day use themselves. Theological criteria were also important factors in the decision-making process. The church's - or at least, the leadership's - theological understanding was a key factor in its 'world-view.' Its evangelicalism tended to emphasise the 'spiritual' side of life as being more important than the here-and-now.

Again, what political sympathy may be discerned from the church records indicates that the church found itself broadly in sympathy with the National Government. No mention is made of the two most significant political events of the Thirties - so far as this thesis is concerned - the 1931 General Election and the 1935 launch of the Council of Action. Similarly, the debate over pacifism barely warranted a mention. What loosely pacifist sympathies the church did possess were focussed on the annual Armistice-tide observances and clearly reflected an acceptance of the necessity of war in certain circumstances. Also, what little reference is to be found to developments on the Continent may be construed as preparing the church for a future necessary step to be taken by Britain in defence of the weak in Germany. Pacificism thus appears to have become the accepted position for the church by this time.

In many ways the Brighton Road Baptist Church was similar in outlook to the Croham Road Church. However, its ecclesiology was both more developed and more conservative in the sociological sense. Ironically, there were also deep rifts over the nature of evangelicalism, especially during the ministry of Harry Spelman. Much time was spent during the Thirties debating issues of membership, details reflecting on the perceived prestige or otherwise of deacons, and matters pertaining to worship and preaching. The whole issue of who should be regarded as a member occupied Church Meeting after Church Meeting in the mid-Thirties, yet the church remained deeply divided over this issue.

Preoccupied as it thus was with problems of decline and disputed churchmanship, the Brighton Road church found it difficult to respond to increasingly severe social conditions in its neighbourhood. By the end of the decade the church was still labouring under this burden, and continuing to lose ground both numerically and financially. Indeed, a cycle of decline had by this time become firmly established whereby the church became more and more distanced from its local community. Not unrelated to this debate was a growing sense of alienation amongst the younger members of the church as their attempts at evangelistic innovation, enlivening of the services and catering for the social needs of their peers were all, in turn, opposed by a group within the church's leadership. This group of deacons and older church members could remember the old days of Nonconformist greatness and longed for their return. Consequently, they viewed any 'modernisation' of the church as destruction of the old social amalgam. Thus, it comes as no surprise that on the subject of traditional social issues the position of the church was clear. It identified itself with the standard anti-Sunday cinema, pro-Temperance, apoliticalism which had descended on Nonconformists since the mid-1910s. Yet even on these issues, there was a distinct weakening of protest by the end of the decade.

Additionally, the financial pressures which restricted the work of the church were severe and, like its counterpart at Croham Road giving to outside organisations tended to be to causes with which church members could easily identify. Yet we have noted that in some intangible way the building project at Croham Road - whilst increasing financial pressures - also provided a focus which helped the church through the difficult years of the late 1930s. What internal dispute there may have been occurred in the run-up to the building work. The years following that work had been

difficult but, by all accounts, happy. Brighton Road possessed no such cohesive factor.

In both of these two local churches and in the central leadership of the Baptist denomination there can thus be discerned a marked parallel in thought and practice. No strident critique of prevailing social conditions was articulated, and there was a reluctance to engage in positive social action. Thus, if Aubrey and Carlile were intent on leading the Baptist denomination into a broadly Conservative position, the two South Croydon churches considered here show every sign, on the whole, of being willing to be led. Or perhaps more accurately, it may be suggested that the lead given by the Baptist Union hierarchy accurately reflected and paralleled the grass-roots changes which had occurred and were still occurring in the churches. Indeed, it may even be argued that these two churches represent a distinctive and widely-followed pattern of Baptist church life in Britain in the 1930s. Yet even in these two geographically-close situations differences of emphasis can be discerned. I would suggest that the distinctive elements in the ethos and response of each church derive from their underlying theological values - Croham Road being significantly more evangelical than Brighton Road.

The other churches studied in this thesis tend to follow one or other of these patterns of churchmanship. Thus in the late 1920s and early 1930s Avenue Baptist Church, Southend, under the dynamic evangelical leadership of J N Britton had experienced unprecedented numerical growth. Britton also brought to the church a commitment to finding a social expression for the Gospel rooted in his deeply-held evangelicalism. Yet after Britton left the church in 1935 the church went through a period of reassessment as the membership roll was pruned drastically - just as it was at Brighton Road. Financial difficulties also began to appear. By the time of the

outbreak of the Second World War the church was in clear decline. It would appear that the sheer power of Britton's personality and his commitment to ordinary people was such that the familiar elements of decline were deferred until his ministry concluded. Yet when decline did come it was rapid and widespread, leaving the church reeling under its impact.

Similarly, we have noted that the church at Brentwood was one of many in Essex that benefited from the wider ministry of Theo Bamber when he was at Frinton from 1921 to 1926. Bamber's heartening influence and the church's attachment to Keswick theology and practice encouraged growth in the 1920s. Yet as the Thirties opened the church found itself in steep decline. As in so many churches, this was in part made worse by a tightening of membership criteria. From this time on the church roll was regularly pruned and active discipline was practised. Yet this very act of disciplined review of the church roll meant that many of the fringe members now felt clearly excluded, and so withdrew from even occasional attendance. As at Brighton Road, Croydon, games such as billiards and bagatelle were regarded with deep suspicion. Again, this latent reliance on the outlook of 'old dissent' distanced the church from the realities of life in the wider world. The Brentwood church had a long history of helping the needy in practical ways. Yet, by the 1930s the church's financial crisis led to even further withdrawal from active involvement in the social needs of the community. Significantly, the Keswick meetings also faltered at this time, finally ceasing by mid-decade. Reform of the style of worship led to only a short-term improvement, but a deep depression had settled on the church with the morning congregation halving between 1934 and 1937. Thus, Brentwood serves as a classic case of a Baptist church facing arrested progress as a result of the complex of

pressures exerted upon it in the 1930s.

We have also seen that Park Road Baptist Church, Rushden, Northants, had a long and honourable history, being proud of its decisive Nonconformist tradition. However, its solid evangelicalism could not save it from crisis during the Thirties. Financial strain in the form of a major refurbishment of the church buildings weighed heavily on the church. Although numerical growth still took place in bursts - inevitably linked to evangelistic campaigns - and, as in so many other places, changes took place in the church's worship style, the church found itself increasingly distanced from the broad mass of the populace amongst which it was set. This once politically active church was now decidedly uninterested in political issues. Such a change must have been in part due to the stance taken by the ministers in the 1910s and 1920s who were crucial in stamping an evangelical apoliticalism on the church. Certainly, J A Sutherland showed no interest in politics when at Brighton Road, South Croydon, and nor did H J Horn in his subsequent ministry at Rye Lane, Peckham. In fact, we have noted that the steepest decline was actually deferred until shortly after the Second World War. Geographical and cultural isolation may well have been the key factors in protecting the church from the crises which most of their co-religionists had been forced to face much earlier in the century.

Thus for all of these evangelical Baptist churches, set as they were in the comparative affluence of the South East of England, certain key features may be discerned. Their evangelicalism did not protect them from numerical decline. Indeed, it may be suggested that their reliance on conversion as the principal means of social differentiation meant that they generally failed to analyse the changes in their fortunes with sufficient objectivity and dispassionate criticism. Nor did their

theologies prove sufficiently developed and comprehensive to furnish them with a world-view capable of issuing in a theological response to the complex changes they found themselves facing in the Thirties. Each of these churches sensed that 'something' had changed, but as to what that 'something' was, they were at a loss to know. Sensing crisis they simply learned to cope with their new position in society whilst remaining largely confused as to what that status might actually be. It is also important to note that the actual timing of the crises which faced these churches varied. In general, local factors - whether in terms of their church ethos, strength, etc, or local social conditions - were the deciding factors in determining the precise point at which the sharpest decline occurred. Yet the common thread running through each case study is that of a crisis of confidence and a loss of a clearly-defined *raison d'être*.

A second significant social pattern emerges from the study of Baptist churches in the depressed areas of Britain. Thus in the Thirties the Gwent Baptist Association faced severe financial hardship due to rising unemployment rates in the Valleys, compounded by unmanageable loan repayments on the vast chapels and Sunday School halls erected in the early years of the twentieth century. The financial restrictions felt by the 'suburban' churches exhibited themselves as full-blown crises in South Wales. The recurrent crises of the Twenties and Thirties brought out the best in some churches in South Wales, with many chapels using their limited resources to feed and educate men in distress. Yet some of this activity had to be undertaken in spite of the opposition of large groups within their membership. Moreover, these economic and industrial crises also destroyed the certitudes which had undergirded generations of Welsh Baptist life. Evangelism now seemed almost sacrilegious when so many were hungry and jobless. Unlike the case studies already referred to above, in

South Wales there was a willingness on the part of many to think out the issues and to rise to the challenge of the slump, even if it meant that long-held Christian values might be challenged. Yet, here as elsewhere, for others the only hope of survival was perceived to rest in an escape to the old certainties, irrelevant as they increasingly were to the contemporary world. The result of this evading of the issues was disastrous. The crises facing the Baptists of South Wales were, in essence, no different from those facing Christians in London suburbia, yet, in practice, they were far more pressing in South Wales than in suburbia.

This pattern was echoed amongst the Baptist churches of Yorkshire, which appear to have reached a significant crisis point with the outbreak of the Great War. In these churches, for generations rooted in Christian pacifism, a further crucial factor was the difficulty the leaders of the Association had in coming to terms with a Christian patriotism which required what they perceived to be the rejection of Christian pacifism. Hard as the war was on northern churches, however, the Twenties temporarily saw renewed vision for growth and church planting. Whilst not ignoring social issues, the emphasis now lay once again firmly on the need for spiritual growth and expansion. Yet, as elsewhere, such an emphasis did little more than defer the emerging crisis in the churches.

The traditional link between chapel and Liberalism being long dead, in the more working-class churches of Yorkshire sympathies with the Labour Party became well-established (although even in these cases, the churches remained cautious in adopting a radical political stance). The more suburban causes, however, remained solidly Conservative. Plans for church growth and the erection of new buildings were pared down or rejected altogether. As elsewhere, whilst church membership had continued to fall

off, the considerable increase in numbers of 'sermon tasters' during the 1920s swelled congregations, but served only to hide the seriousness of the plight facing the churches. By 1936 deep numerical and financial crisis gripped the churches, and a certain introspection settled on them, interspersed with only very occasional concern about international situations. The great social evils of the day were, as ever, conceived to be cinema, drink, immorality and gambling, thus perpetuating the tendency to drive a social wedge between the churched and the unchurched. These general trends were particularly evident in the case of Beulah Baptist Church, Hollinwood, Oldham.

It may well be that the study of Queen's Road Baptist Church, Coventry, indicates a third - although comparatively small - category of Baptist churches in the 1930s. These were generally larger 'institutional churches' of a more liberal theological persuasion. Some of their characteristics are actually more akin to the Methodist Central Missions. Under Howard Ingli James membership at Queen's Road rose steadily from 1930 to 1935, but fell back slowly in the eight remaining years of his ministry. Frankly, this does not appear to have bothered James unduly. He was concerned rather for the demonstration of the Kingdom of God in practical and tangible terms. The years of James' ministry were marked by financial difficulties arising from a number of factors: the church was engaging in newer, more costly ministries; unemployment in Coventry was rising rapidly; the membership was, on average, younger than had previously been the case; the considerable body of Welsh members sent money home to their even more hard-pressed families in South Wales. Yet during these years the church explored the key theme of Christian community and citizenship. Emphasis was placed on the needs of young people, and James frequently preached on issues pertaining to economics

and unemployment, especially when Coventry was in some way affected. He had a vision for the Kingdom of God on earth and a Christian conscience sensitive to the social, political and economic implications of the Gospel. His political radicalism served as a powerful draw to many, and such was the manner in which his ideas were presented that he managed to take many of his more Conservative members with him, and even when they could not agree with their pastor they seemed able to differ one from the other with Christian tolerance and graciousness.

Sunday cinema and sport were vigorously opposed, although James saw both the cinema and sport as themselves gifts from God. Deep concern was expressed and long debates took place over the issue of gambling (in the form of whist drives and football pools), and the nature of brewery advertising. Significantly, drama was much used for entertainment at Queen's Road, the church having a flourishing Drama Society. Yet even here there was a conservative reaction in 1933 over the content of a play performed by the society. The same issue arose in March 1934 and January 1935. Queen's Road opened a pioneering centre for the unemployed in the early Thirties which, amongst other ministries, cared for more than 50 men over the age of 60 years. As the Second World War approached, James maintained his absolute pacifism, whilst also condemning the evils of dictatorship. In this he was joined by many in the church, more than forty men registering as conscientious objectors on the outbreak of hostilities. James preached long and hard the need for trust in God in the dark days of the Thirties.

This thesis has demonstrated that during the 1930s the Baptist Union and many local Baptist churches experienced a period of crisis. It was, however, not a sudden crisis such as that which faced them in 1907 (as

they first realised that their numbers - and hence, influence, were waning) or 1914 (as the outbreak of the Great War finally threw old securities to the wind). This was now a long-term, deepening crisis of confidence and identity. In the Thirties the situation for the churches declined rapidly because the national crisis tended to highlight the helplessness of the churches. Their voices were now largely silent, not because their own ethos had fundamentally changed, but because they were increasingly no longer sure what role remained to them in the broader fabric of British society. It has also been argued that their recourse to issues of 'old dissent' merely served to isolate them from the rapidly changing society about them. Some Baptist leaders saw this - as did Stanley Dewhurst at Croham Road over the issue of Sunday cinema. Despite the brief resurgence of Baptist fortunes in the early- to mid-1920s, the denomination - and Nonconformity as a whole - was in steady, remorseless decline. This thesis has indicated both the breadth and the depth of that decline. In every area of church life uncertainty had become the norm. To make matters worse, theological debate became increasingly limited solely to those areas of thought which might be termed 'spiritual.' Lively, theological critique and response to the national and international crises of the Thirties and the relevance of the Christian message to such issues was meagre in extent and inadequate in content. Thus the Baptist denomination found itself groping for a new sense of purpose, but doing so without the essential contribution which thorough, sustained and wide-ranging theological reflection could have afforded.

This thesis has also shown that the crises faced by English and Welsh Baptists reflected the patterns of change in the broader social, economic, political and philosophical life of Britain in the twentieth century. The security of Victorian certainties had passed and now both nation and

churches felt the cold wind of re-assessment. Life and attitudes in local Baptist churches closely mirrored those of the communities in which they found themselves. The national crises of the Thirties served to precipitate the realisation in the church that all was not well. Sadly, it appears that all too often the very sense of decline and crisis that permeated church life caused introspection and intense reassertion of old values and what were considered to be well-tried strategies. Neither proved adequate for the entirely new ethos now facing the churches and society at large. In particular, evangelicals within the denomination were distinguishable by a general reliance on activistic responses which usually centred around evangelism and a negativity towards social change. As a consequence the churches became ever more isolated from the broader society in which they found themselves placed. A cycle of decline had become established, acute crisis had effectively evolved into long-term, pragmatic survivalism.

Appendix 1

Statistics of the Baptist Denomination, 1921 to 1939

These statistics have been compiled from the various *Annual Reports* published each year by the denomination. In this appendix the Baptist denomination has been placed in the wider context of British churches during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Invaluable for this purpose has been MARC Europe's *A Century of British Christianity*. [1]

Appendix 1:1 Number of Churches

The number of Baptist churches grew steadily throughout the period 1921 to 1929. [2] The peak was, in fact, reached in 1950, at which time the nearly 3300 churches were 600 more than at the start of the century. [3] There was a 20% increase in the number of churches between 1900 and 1940. [4]

Appendix 1:2 Number of Church Buildings

A peak for the number of Baptist church buildings is apparent in 1929. Presumably, this constitutes a response to the post-Great War Baptist membership achieved between 1922 and 1926. [5] Of greater interest are the figures charted in Table No 5. This reveals that the average number of buildings per Baptist Church actually declined steadily during the period 1921 to 1939. [6] The decline was temporarily halted between 1925 and 1929 before it continued apace in 1930. Additionally, the total number of seats in Baptist churches reached its peak in 1930. [7] However, throughout the

1920s and 1930s the average number of seats per church declined - from 472 in 1921 to 445 in 1939.[8]

Appendix 1:3 Number of Pastors and Lay Preachers

No steady pattern emerges as to the number of Baptist pastors in service between 1921 and 1939.[9] The Anglicans lost approximately 10% of their total number of ministers each 20 years between 1900 and 1940.[10] Methodist numbers peaked in 1915, and stayed high throughout the 1920s, 30s and 40s. Decline set in during the late 1950s.[11] The average number of members cared for by each Baptist pastor remained fairly constant at about 200.[12] The number of Baptist lay preachers remained fairly constant until 1939 when decline set in due to the outbreak of the Second World War.[13]

Appendix 1:4 Number of Baptisms

This was a statistic that was not recorded until 1930. Only limited conclusions, then, can be drawn from the tables. There is a hint that the number of baptisms peaked in 1931, but that cannot be stated conclusively.[14] What is clear is that the number of baptisms declined steadily throughout the 1930s.

Appendix 1:5 Adult Membership

Undergirding all other statistical changes in Baptist church life was that of fluctuating membership figures. During the period 1920 to 1940 the population of Great Britain rose from 42.769 million to 46.467

million.[15] The increase took place at a rate of about 1 million each 5 years. The steady growth in the general population is the background against which the decline in church membership within all the mainline Protestant denominations must be considered. The total Anglican membership peaked in 1930, at which time there were 31% more members than in 1900: 'As a percentage of the total adult population the peak was in 1910 when 14.16% of English adults were Anglican Roll members. This dropped in the First World War, but has continuously declined since the Second World War...'[16] MARC's statistics, in fact, show that the decline began in 1931. The 1930 figure of 3.656 million (12.8% of population - '12.8% pop') had fallen to 3.389 million (11.3% pop) by 1940.[17] This rate of decline was mirrored in both the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Ireland. Methodists are more difficult to study because of the amalgamations which took place in 1907 (between Methodists of the New Connexion, Bible Christians and the United Methodist Free Church to form the United Methodist Church) and 1932 (between the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists to form the Methodist Church).[18] Total English Methodist membership stood at 0.727 million (3.1% pop) in 1900 and peaked numerically in 1910 at 0.792 million (3.0% pop). Its post-First World War resurgence peaked in 1930 at 0.788 million (2.5% pop). Rapid decline was deferred until 1960. Congregationalists grew in number in the first quarter of the twentieth century then went into gradual decline. For Congregationalists the 1900 figure of 0.511 million (2.0% pop) in Great Britain rose to peak at 0.580 million (2.2% pop) in 1905. The peak was sustained for almost a decade before steady decline in percentage terms began in 1915.[19] The Churches of Christ, the Church of the Nazarene, the Religious Society of Friends, Seventh Day Adventists and Moravians memberships all remained steady at approximately 0.1% of the

population.[20] Baptists in Great Britain totalled 0.363 million (1.4% pop) in 1900 and rose to peak at 0.423 million (1.6% pop) in 1905. Despite falling to 0.402 (1.3% pop) in 1920 a new, though lower, peak of 0.411 million (1.3% pop) came in 1925.[21] Both total numbers and percentages declined steadily throughout the 1930s. The Roman Catholic Church has had virtually continuous growth since 1900: 'Catholic membership is defined differently to Protestant membership, and includes all born and christened in Catholic families, and is thus more akin to the Protestant concept of "community".'[22] The membership of 2.036 million (5.5% pop) in Great Britain in 1900 rose steadily to 3.021 million (6.5% pop) in 1940.[23] MARC suggest that for the second half of this century 'Catholics have membership but falling attendance, Protestants have attendance but falling membership.'[24] How far this is true of the earlier part of the century is difficult to determine. Table No 1 shows that the average membership of Baptist churches in the 1920s and 1930s never rose above 135. Yet the church buildings were, on average, capable of seating well in excess of 400 people throughout this period. The MARC monograph does go further, however, to state that 1900 to 1930

'...was a period of high membership and church interest, peaking just before the outbreak of the First World War, largely during the reign of Edward VII who died in 1910. The war reduced church membership but by and large numbers recovered in the aftermath of the war in the twenties. It is the remnant of people from this era who are now dying. They were keen church members, and often left the residue of their estate to church causes...The decline from the recovery began in the depressing and anxiety torn years of the 1930s.'[25]

Appendix 1:6 Sunday School Scholars and Teachers[26]

The period from 1900 to 1910 saw an absolute increase in Sunday School scholars in every Protestant denomination.[27] At this time almost 50% of all British children were in Sunday Schools, and 25% of the adult population was a church member.[28] Decline in the number of children in Baptist Sunday Schools began around 1910. It continued at a rate of approximately 10% each decade. The Great War was the watershed in the churches' work amongst children. In the Baptist denomination numbers recovered slightly in absolute terms, but declined from 1924. The number of Sunday School teachers remained fairly constant until the mid-1930s, which means that the average class size dropped from a little over 9 children per teacher to a little over 7 children per teacher. This may be a further pointer to the nature of the general decline in Baptist numbers in this period. Those active and committed within local church life are less likely to drift away from the church. The same feature is observable in the constituency of the Baptist lay preachers for this period.[29]

Footnotes to Appendix 1:

1. *A Century of British Christianity: Historical Statistics 1900-1985 with projections to 2000*, ed P Brierley, 1989, MARC Monograph No 14. In the numerous references to this document given below it is simply referred to as 'MARC.'
2. See Chart No 1. See also, MARC, pp 66 to 79. The statistics for the Baptist churches have been presented in two ways in order to render them more useful. Charts 1-9 are linear plots of statistics over time. Charts 10-14 which then follow express relationships between various statistics. These relationships are expressed mathematically immediately below each Chart.
3. MARC, p 70.
4. MARC, p 72.
5. See Chart No 2.
6. See Chart No 14.
7. See Chart No 6.
8. See Chart No 11.
9. See Chart No 3.
10. MARC, p 54.
11. MARC, pp 55f.

12. MARC, p 60.
13. See Chart Nos 4 and 13. See also, MARC, pp 58f. It is significant that by the mid-1930s the denomination was becoming increasingly reliant on the services of lay preachers: 'The [Baptist Union] Council desire to acknowledge the value of the work done by our laymen as preachers....We know that without them the work of many of our Churches could not be carried on effectively.' (*Annual Report: 1935*, p 25.)
14. See Chart No 5. See also MARC, pp 36 to 40.
15. MARC, p 4.
16. MARC, p 6.
17. MARC, p 7. For details of Anglican, Presbyterian and Moravian communicants, see MARC, pp 30ff.
18. MARC, p 9.
19. MARC, p 17.
20. MARC, pp 20f.
21. MARC, p 15. Note that the percentage remained 1.3%.
22. MARC, pp 20f.
23. MARC, pp 20ff.
24. MARC, pp 25f.
25. *ibid.*
26. See Chart Nos 8, 9, and 12.
27. MARC, p 50.
28. *ibid.*
29. See Chart No 4.

Statistics of the Baptist Denomination, 1921 to 1939

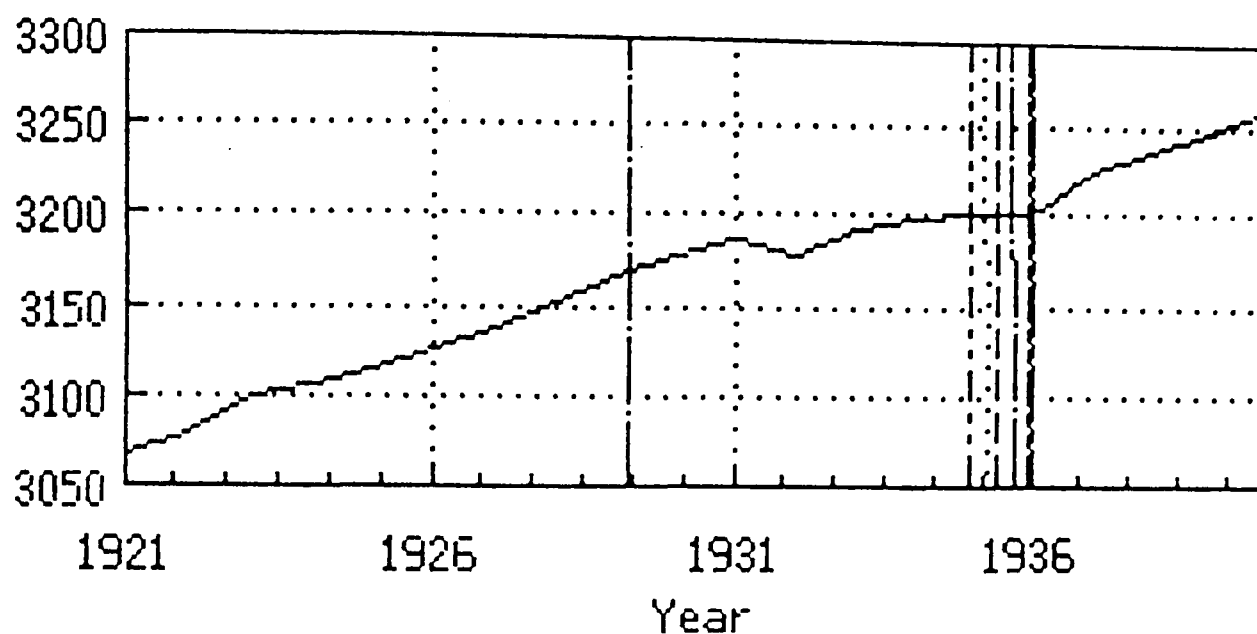
Year:	No. of Churches	No. of Church Buildings	No. of Pastors	No. of Lay Preachers	No. of Baptisms	Total Church Seating	Total Adult Members	Sunday School Scholars	Sunday School Teachers
1921	3068	4180	2078	5153		1447317	402688	517969	56543
1922	3078	4173	2039	5186		1448610	404797	523805	58114
1923	3098	4179	2070	5454		1441512	411315	530526	59545
1924	3106	4167	2066	5493		1450323	413841	530782	59997
1925	3113	4183	2051	5541		1452877	414210	525847	60612
1926	3124	4188	2069	5371		1454211	416665	515564	60209
1927	3137	4203	2102	5539		1457084	415083	509468	60048
1928	3153	4235	2111	5581		1462849	411389	500080	60081
1929	3165	4252	2085	5457		1462722	406954	488942	59451
1930	3178	4243	2051	5521	11297	1465893	406342	483430	59539
1931	3186	4174	2037	5438	12209	1449631	406216	479193	59661
1932	3177	4141	2053	5496	11524	1446433	405457	476844	59909
1933	3192	4153	2057	5700	11702	1445814	403947	465763	59618
1934	3198	4149	2073	5543	10740	1443734	402959	454581	59073
1935	3200	4164	2061	5467	9909	1442137	401175	437573	57769
1936	3202	4162	2067	5403	9572	1441206	396531	418483	56211
1937	3224	4173	2035	5297	9588	1439687	392535	401906	54955
1938	3235	4196	2045	5314	8731	1441154	388373	387000	53319
1939	3247	4195	2077	5242	9113	1436127	385706	376979	53557
1940	3264	4215	2101	5046	7088	1423762	382337	377316	52554
1944	3196	4106	1928	4621	6146	1421762	368273	292111	38554

Year:	Church/ Member Ratio	Church/ Seat Ratio	Scholar/ Teacher Ratio	Pastor/ Preacher Ratio	Building/ Church Ratio
1921	131.25	471.75	9.16	0.40	1.36
1922	131.51	470.63	9.01	0.39	1.36
1923	132.77	465.30	8.91	0.38	1.35
1924	133.24	466.94	8.85	0.38	1.34
1925	133.06	466.71	8.68	0.37	1.34
1926	133.38	465.50	8.56	0.39	1.34
1927	132.32	464.48	8.48	0.38	1.34
1928	130.48	463.95	8.32	0.38	1.34
1929	128.58	462.16	8.22	0.38	1.34
1930	127.86	461.26	8.12	0.37	1.34
1931	127.50	455.00	8.03	0.37	1.31
1932	127.62	455.28	7.96	0.37	1.30
1933	126.55	452.95	7.81	0.36	1.30
1934	126.00	451.45	7.70	0.37	1.30
1935	125.37	450.67	7.57	0.38	1.30
1936	123.84	450.10	7.44	0.38	1.30
1937	121.75	446.55	7.31	0.38	1.29
1938	120.05	445.49	7.26	0.38	1.30
1939	118.79	442.29	7.04	0.40	1.29
1940	117.14	436.20	7.18	0.42	1.29
1944	115.23	444.86	7.58	0.42	1.28

Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 1: Number of churches

No. of Churches

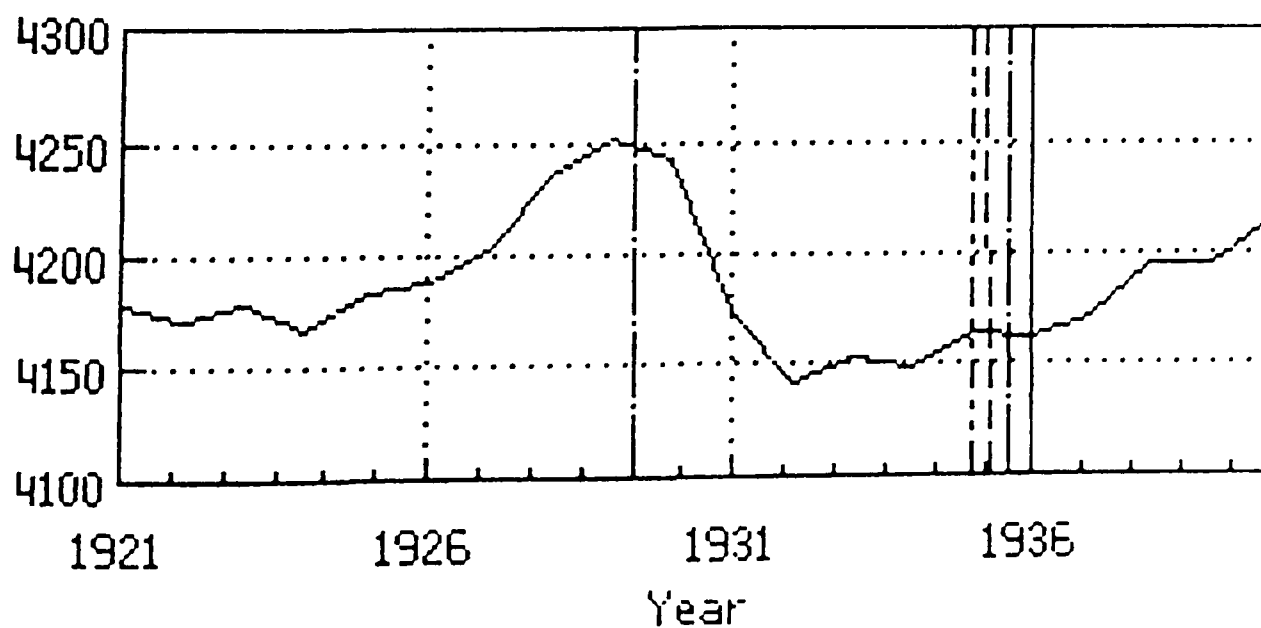


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Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 2: Number of church buildings

No. of Buildings

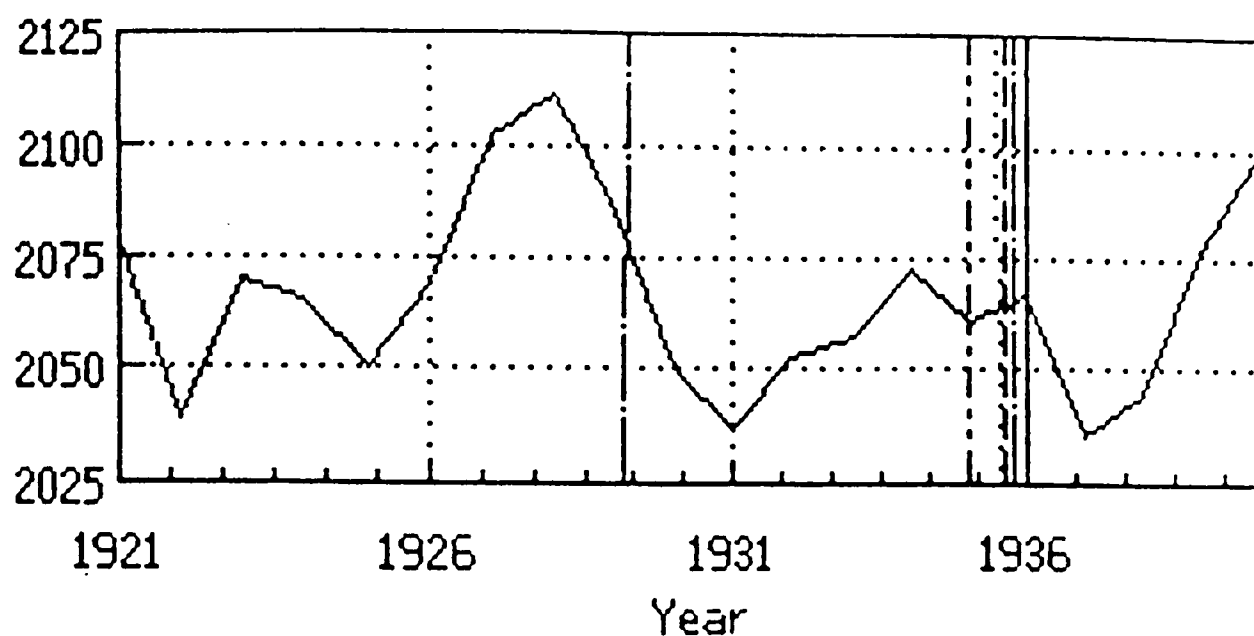


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Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 3: Number of pastors

No. of Pastors

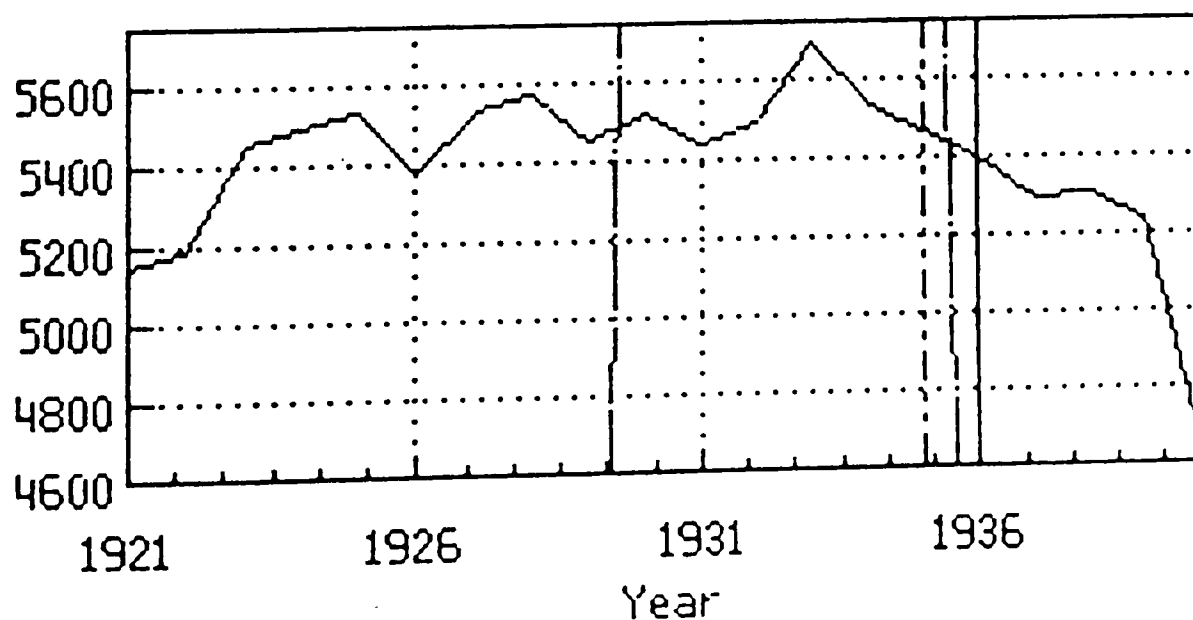


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Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 4: Number of lay preachers

No. of Lay Preachers

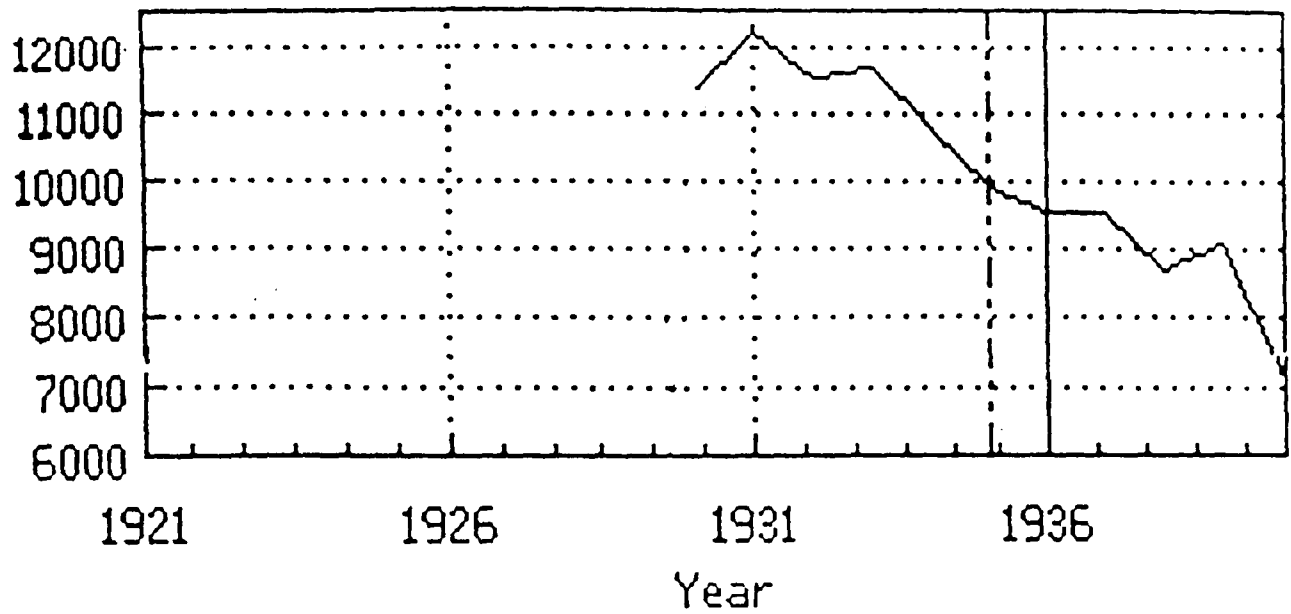


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Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 5: Number of baptisms

No. of Baptisms

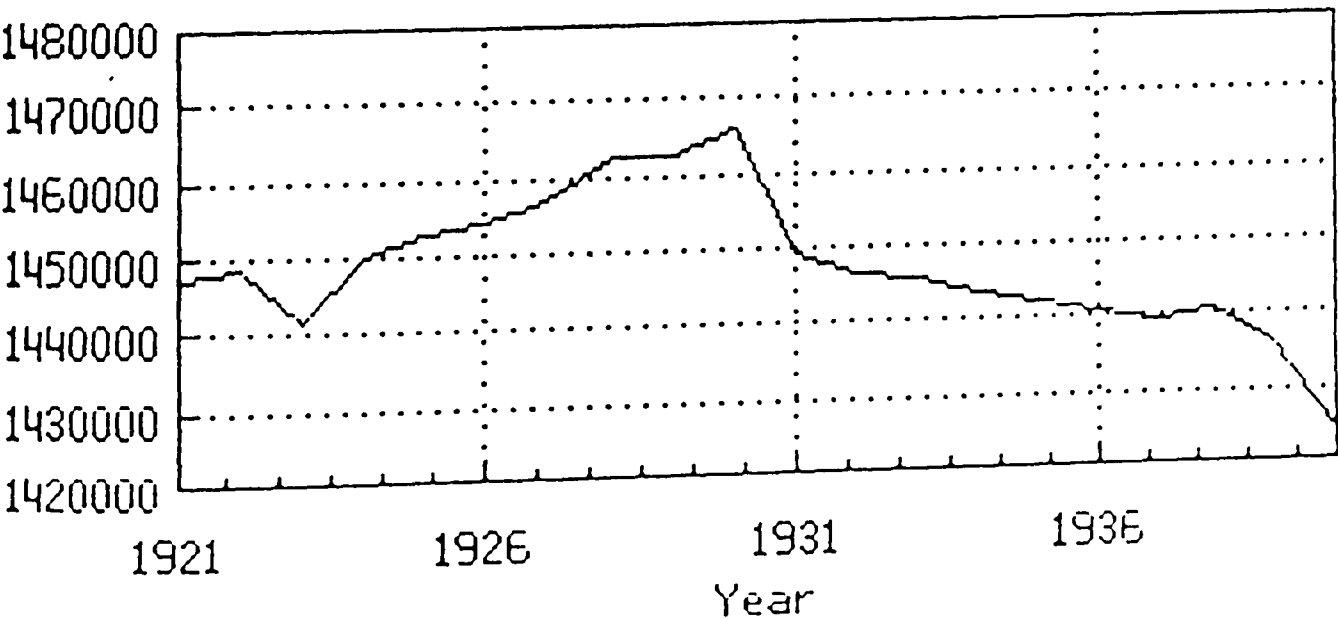


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Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 6: Number of seats in churches

No. of Seats



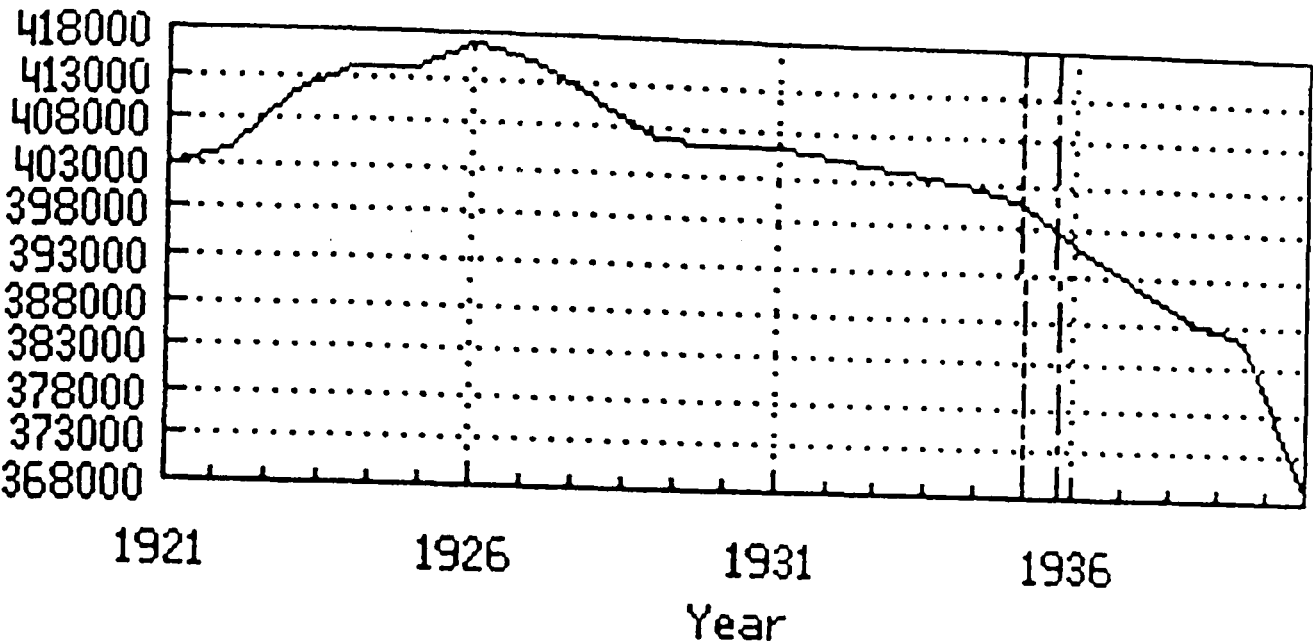
Baptist Union Annual Reports, passim

Note: Baptism records were only begun in 1930.

Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 7: Number of adult members

No. of Members

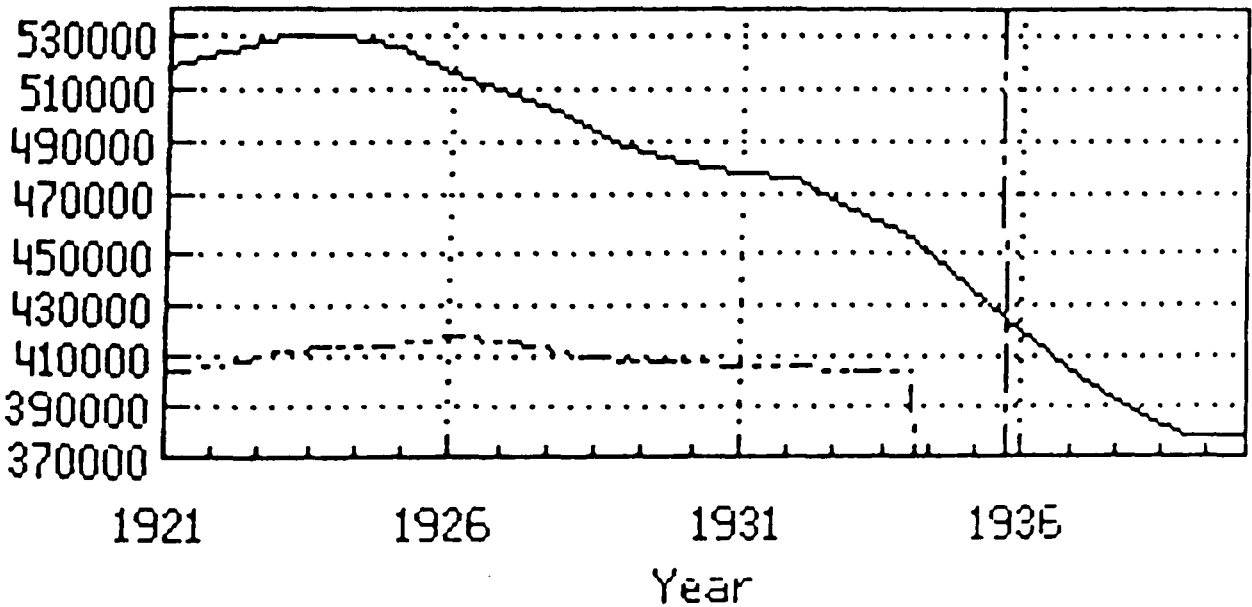


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Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 8: Number of Sunday school scholars

Sunday Sch. Scholars

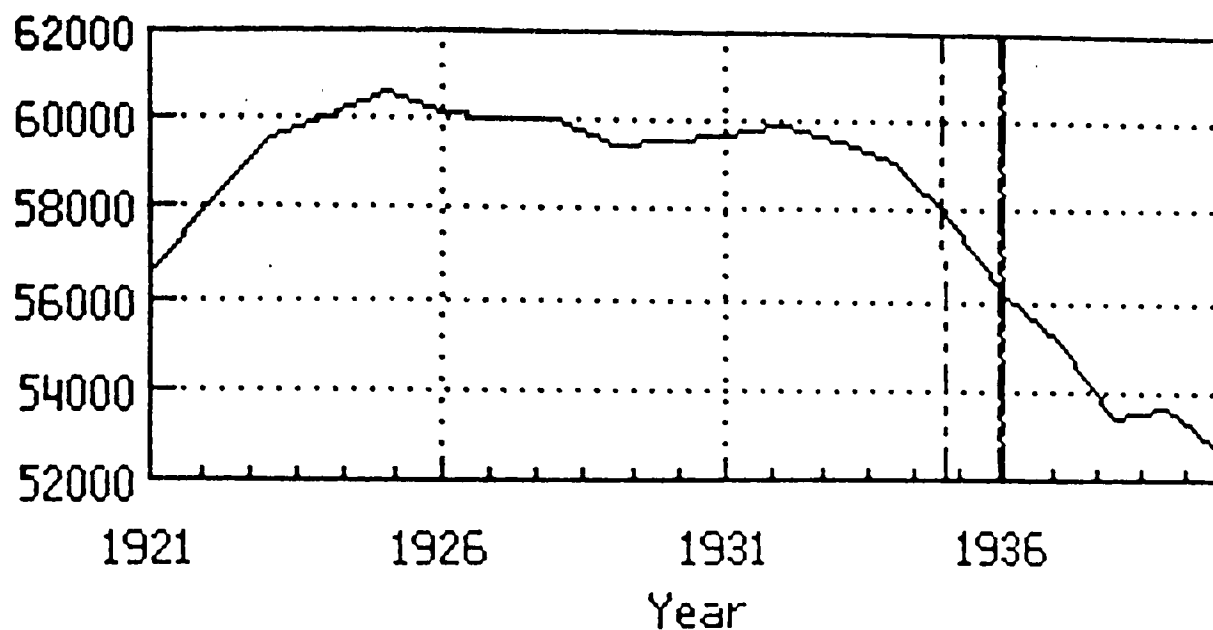


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Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 9: Number of Sunday school teachers

Sunday Sch. Teachers

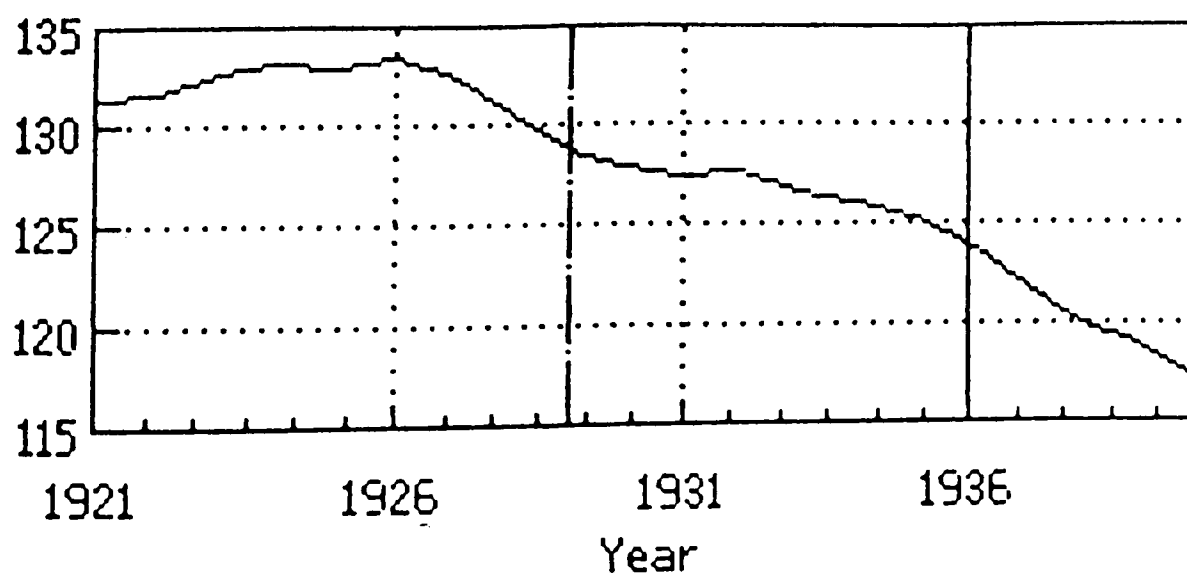


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Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 10: Average membership of Baptist churches

Average Membership

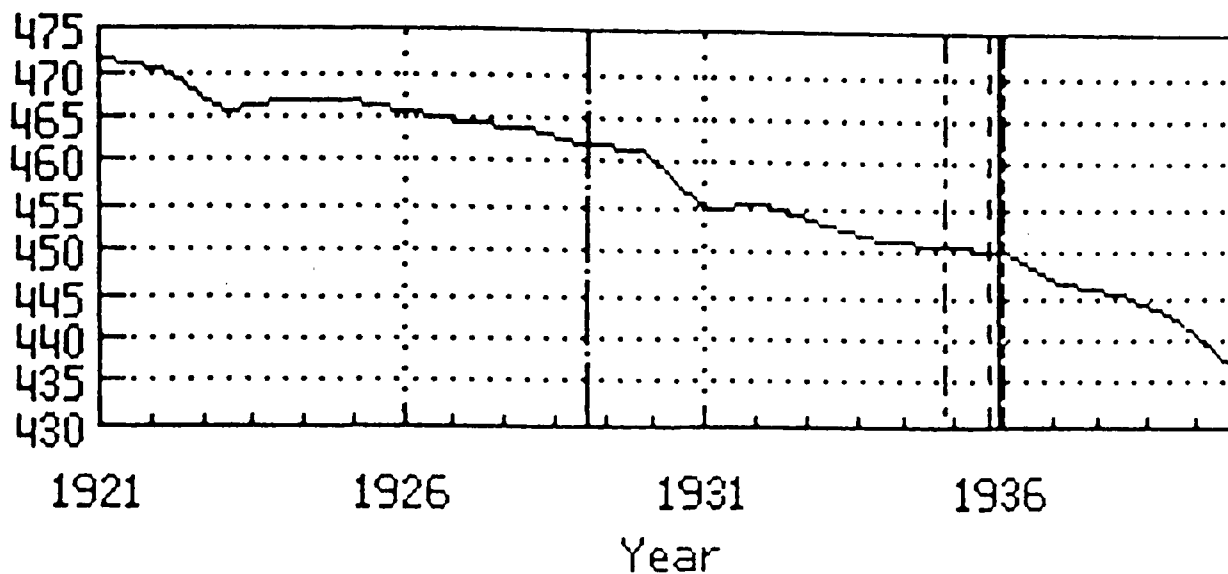


Total Membership of BU Churches divided
by the number of churches

Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 11: Average number of seats per church

Average Seating

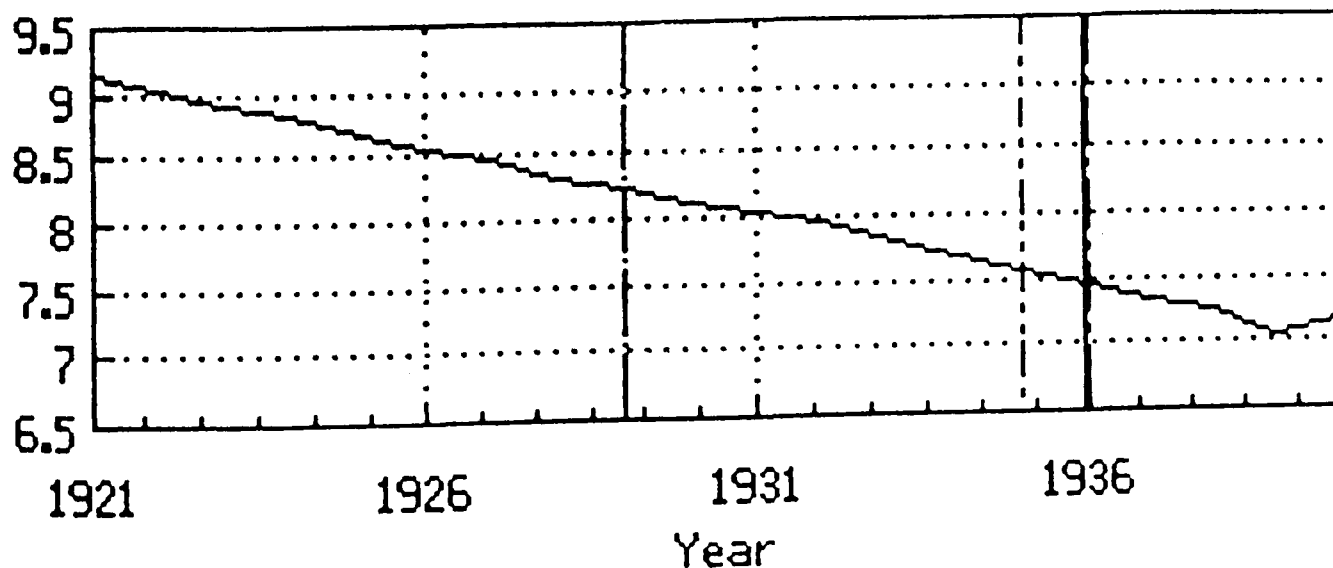


Total Seating of BU Churches divided
by the number of churches

Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 12: Average number of scholars per Sunday school teacher

Ratio

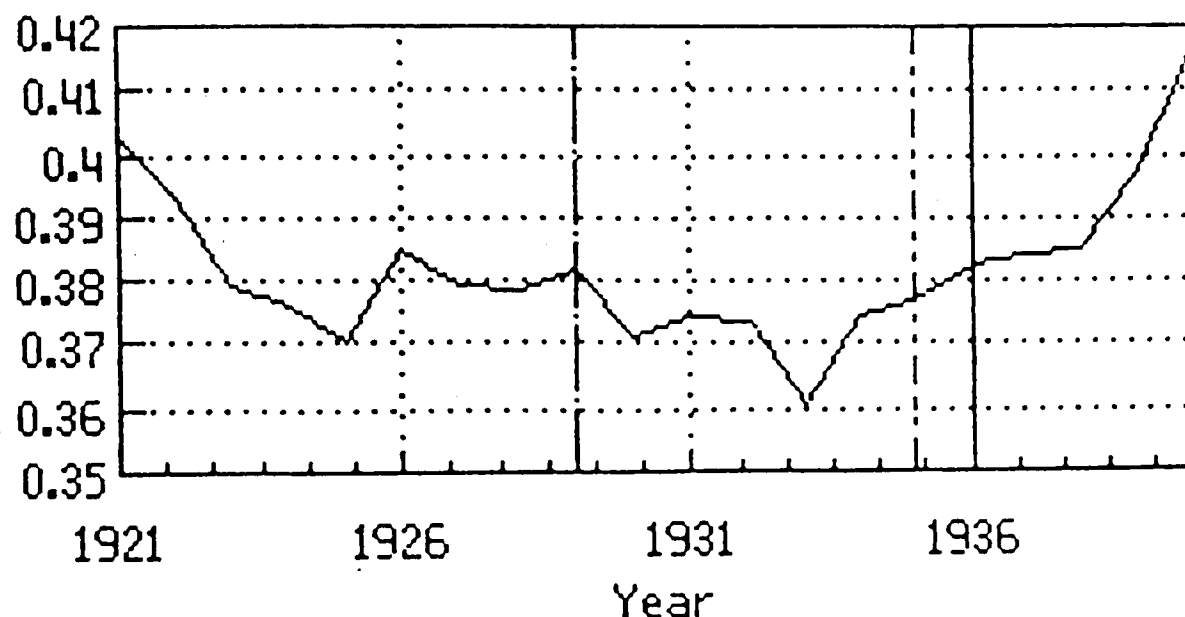


Total Number of Sunday School Scholars
divided by Number of Teachers

Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 13: Number of pastors per lay preacher

Pastors/Lay preacher

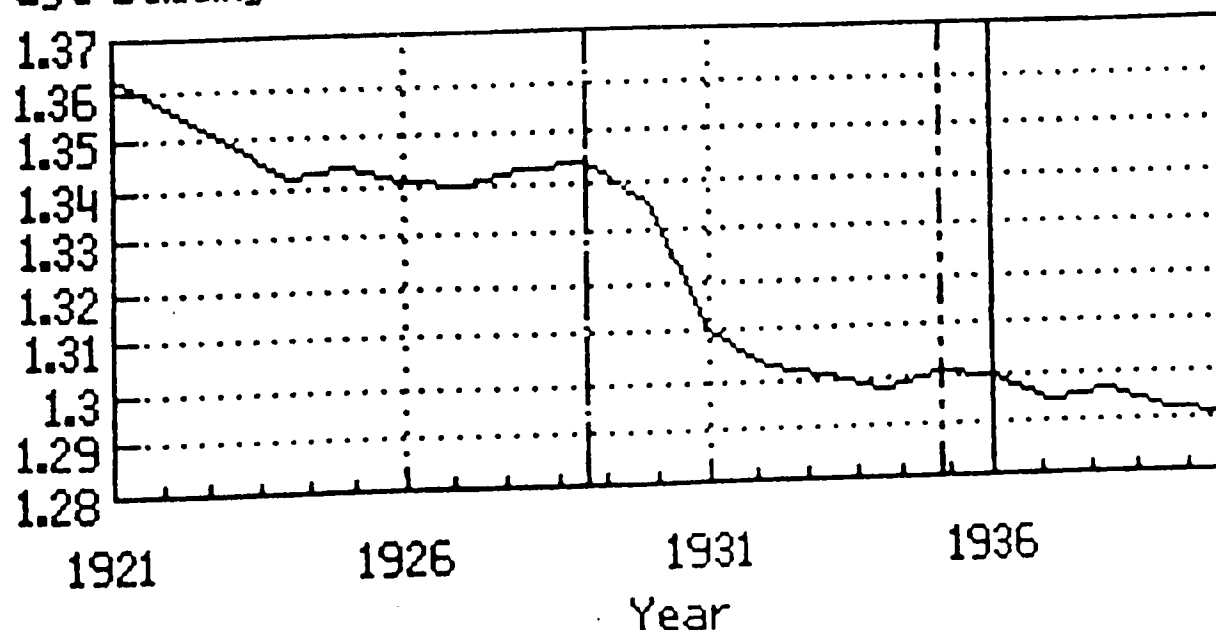


Total Number of Pastors divided by
the Number of Lay Preachers

Statistics of the British Baptist denomination, 1921-1940

Chart No 14: Average number of buildings per Baptist church

Average Buildings



Total Number of Baptist Church Buildings
divided by the Number of Churches

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